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Dear Sir

It is uncertain at what time I shall come to Hanley & Barnsley on the business of your mention. In addition to this it will not be in my power to be absent were a sabbath having already spent a week abroad this summer & being engaged for others, and as it will not be in my power whenever I come to preach more than two or at most three times, it is more than probable, I shall be confined in the neighborhood of Newcastle & Burslem; Should I have upon further enquiry find it practicable to reach Whitehaven, I will let you know early enough to give notice of it when the time is fixed.

Yours dear Sir
very sincerely & in haste R. Hall

THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE, BY DR. GREGORY; REMINISCENCES, BY JOHN GREENE, ESQ.; AND HIS CHARACTER AS A PREACHER, BY THE REV. JOHN FOSTER.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D., F.R.A.S.,

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY;

AND

JOSEPH BELCHER, D.D.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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PREFACE.

The editor of this *fourth* volume of the works of the Rev. Robert Hall would only detain the reader for a few moments from the perusal of what, it is hoped, will prove equally pleasing and useful.

My friend, the late Dr. Olinthus Gregory, contemplated the publication of an additional volume of the works of this distinguished preacher, which was to have comprised about thirty sermons; his removal from earth prevented the accomplishment of his purpose.

It has happened, however, that gentlemen who possessed notes of his pulpit productions, either copied from his own manuscripts, or taken in shorthand on their delivery, have, in various periodical and other publications, presented them to the world. The law of copy-right prevents these sermons being readily collected together and published in England; but in this country they can be printed uniform with the other volumes of his works, and American Christians may enjoy a privilege withheld from their brethren in Europe.

In addition to the various periodicals to which he has been largely indebted for the materials composing this volume, the editor would acknowledge the valuable publications of the Rev. T. Grinfield, M.A., and John Greene, Esq.; nor would he omit an expression of his gratitude to the Rev. James Milnor, D.D., of this city, who kindly furnished a copy of the sermons originally reported by the present Bishop of Calcutta, the editor's copy, by an accident, being left in England.

The Reminiscences by Mr. Greene will be highly interesting to the reader. To use the language of Tait's Magazine on their first publication, "This is a specimen of the most pleasing kind of biography, the reminiscences of an attached friend. With the genius of Hall everybody was acquainted; but here we have him in his native, simple, homely, hearty character, a fine example of the dissenting clergymen of England, a body of men who have done more to bring knowledge, temporal and eternal, home to the bosoms of the community, and to keep alive the flame of civil and religious liberty, than any other in the state."

Very many who knew Mr. Hall have united with the editor of the Evangelical Magazine in saying, "Mr. Greene has again and again placed us in his company, and made us feel a second time what it has been our happiness, more than once, to feel in intercourse with the deceased. The large majority of conversations introduced speak for themselves. They cannot be a forgery; and where is the man, then (we pity him if he has an existence), who would consent, on any ground whatever, to lose so many precious memorials of one on whom the admiration of Christendom is now so intensely fixed?"

In collecting, revising, and arranging the materials composing this volume, the editor has had regard to the high reputation of the preacher on the one hand, and has endeavoured, on the other, to preserve a uniformity in style and spirit with the volumes printed under the superintendence of Dr. Gregory. His task has involved more labour than he first supposed it would do; but he has been amply repaid in the result—the production of a volume for which he trusts many thousands will be grateful to the Father of lights, and which shall tend to increase and perpetuate the usefulness of his honoured friend.

It is quite possible that the critical reader may observe some slight inaccuracies in several of the reports of these sermons. This arises, in part at least, from the exceeding rapidity of Mr. Hall's delivery. He, however, who can read the volume in the spirit which would deprive him of the profit he might derive from it, would resemble the man whom Mr. Hall censures for examining his food with a microscope instead of eating it.

It will be observed that occasional notes are introduced by way of illustration or confirmation. Where these have been borrowed, the names of their authors have been appended; for those with the initial B., the editor himself must be held responsible.

Earnestly praying that this volume may be acceptable to the Great Head of the Christian Church, and to the various sections which compose that great and holy community, the editor cheerfully retires, affording the reader an opportunity to gratify the noblest and most refined tastes he can possess.

JOSEPH BELCHER.

New-York, April 5, 1844.

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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REMINISCENCES

OF

THE REV. ROBERT HALL, A.M.

BY JOHN GREENE, ESQ.

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL

REMINISCENCES

OF THE

REV. ROBERT HALL, A.M.

In the year 1795 I first became acquainted with that extraordinary man, the Rev. Robert Hall. He was then pastor of the Baptist Church at Cambridge, to which office he succeeded the Rev. Robert Robinson on the 23d of July, 1791. I saw him for the first time in the pulpit in St. Andrew's-street meeting-house. I was too young fully to understand his discourses, but even then they produced an impression upon my mind of wonder and of delight. I sat in a front seat in the gallery, where many of the forms were quite empty. The house was small, and there were but few persons of the lower class. In the body of the place were many of the most respectable families in the town, but even here the pews were not filled. The members of the church were also few in number; some of them were poor, but possessed of eminent piety, and residents in the surrounding villages. Not a student or member of the University was to be seen in the place. The principal influential members of the church and congregration consisted of persons in the meridian of life, who were embarked in commercial pursuits. A generation of their fathers had been nearly all removed during the ministry of Mr. Robinson. There were a few of these gentlemen of whose intelligence Mr. Hall entertained a very high opinion, which circumstance induced a laborious and diligent preparation for the exercises of the pulpit.

Most of his sermons at this period were written at full length, though preached without the use of notes. His delivery was uncommonly rapid, occasioned by the astonishing flow of his ideas, which literally struggled for utterance. This was accompanied by an impediment in his speech, together with a slight cough, which, by attention, he in some measure overcame. His voice was feeble, and had not much compass or variety of tone. It required great attention to follow him; and such was the stillness which prevailed, that the slightest sound was perceptible, and even the ticking of the clock was distinctly heard. The strictest silence was preserved until Mr. Hall had finished the head of discourse, or made a momentary pause, when a movement was made by the congregation to give vent to suppressed emotions and to refix attention. Notwithstanding the general style of Mr. Hall's sermons, which was far above the comprehension

of ordinary minds, I heard it observed by some of his poorer members, that there were always passages which afforded matter for profitable meditation. A taste for metaphysics led him occasionally to indulge in that mode of reasoning. To this were united keen satire and the purest Attic wit, which were principally directed against skepticism and materialism, to make them appear unphilosophical, absurd, and ridiculous.

His prayers were highly scriptural and devotional; they possessed a solemnity which touched every heart, and prepared the mind for the reception of the sermon. It has been stated that Mr. Hall's religious sentiments were not evangelical till after his illness in 1805. This, however, is a mistaken idea, as may be proved, not only by an appeal to living witnesses, but by the sermons delivered before that period, a few sketches of which will be found in another part of this volume. I am aware that the supposition has been favoured by the opinion entertained by Mr. Hall himself after his recovery, which induced him to give greater prominency to the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel than he had previously done; and it is to the same conviction we may attribute the destruction of his manuscripts after his removal to Leicester.*

These discourses, however, *as he delivered them*, were by no means deficient in orthodoxy. *He divided rightly the word of truth, giving to every one his portion of meat in due season.* I have frequently heard him say that, when he *first* received the invitation to Cambridge, he had "just a sufficient quantum of orthodoxy to pass muster with the pious part of the members, and not too much to be refused by the refined and speculative part of the congregation."

To use his own words, "There was a bad leaven in the place, produced by the preaching of his predecessor, which tended to skepticism." This "leaven," as he termed it, consisted in latitudinarian sentiments, which, under the garb of liberality, had inclined some of his respectable hearers, who were men of considerable talent and influence, to Socinianism, if not to the verge of skepticism. Such was the peculiarity of his situation, that, when I first became acquainted with him, he was engaged in laying the foundations, raising the outworks,

* The late Rev. John Mack, of Clipstone, who was formerly in the army, and who was greatly indebted to Mr. Hall and his friends for his introduction to the ministry, long maintained on earth an intimacy with Mr. Hall, since renewed in heaven, once told me of an amusing anecdote connected with these MSS. He had gone to spend a few days with Mr. H. at Leicester, and going into the study, he saw a high heap of manuscripts by the fireside, and became a little curious to know what they were. They sat down to enjoy their pipes, and Mr. Hall said, "Brother Mack, you will find plenty of paper-lights on that heap." "Why, brother Hall, what are they? they look like sermons." "Why, yes, sir, they were my Sabbath morning sermons at Cambridge; good for nothing, sir; they had very little Gospel in them; but they are very useful now, sir, for the first time." Mr. Mack took an opportunity, during Mr. Hall's absence from the room, to fill his pockets with this waste paper, and used occasionally afterward to treat Mr. Hall with extracts from his own sermons.

This may not be an improper place to introduce another fact, illustrative alike of Mr. Hall's opinion of Mr. Mack, and the humble view he had of himself.

In a company of ministers, Mr. Hall, talking of Mr. Mack, declared that he possessed the most comprehensive and powerful mind of any man in the Baptist denomination. His brethren smiled, and he, with increased energy, repeated his assertion; they again smiled, when he turned to one of them, and said, "I know what you mean, sir, but you are mistaken. You think that *I* am superior to Mr. Mack, but the opinion is not correct. I am quite conscious, sir, that I can preach a better sermon than most of my brethren, but I should be a fool to show it, and a devil to be proud of it."—B.

and establishing the evidences of Christianity, before he could build up his people in their most holy faith. By his peerless eloquence, accompanied with the Divine blessing, he eventually succeeded, and had the happiness of seeing the most sensible and distinguished of his hearers embrace the *truth as it is in Jesus*. He felt and spoke more strongly upon these subjects, having narrowly escaped from similar errors, in consequence of reading Hume's treatise upon miracles, and other deistical works, when a tutor at Bristol. This fact he has frequently related to me, adding, "Sir, I should have been a devil without Christianity."

Mr. Hall's sermons were principally upon subjects suited to the condition of his audience; and his appeals to the consciences and feelings of his hearers were equally pungent and faithful: "What! will you shut out the Deity from his own dominions, till at length the great eternal Being becomes unknown and unacknowledged in his own world? Will you dare to venture on the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler; or will you place briers and thorns before him? He would *pass through them; He would burn them up together!*" To form any idea of the effect produced by these appeals, it would be necessary to witness the expression of his brilliant eye, the moving eloquence of his lifted brow, and the animated and impassioned manner in which his addresses were delivered.

His senior deacon, W. Hollick, Esq., who took the most active part in the society during Mr. Hall's residence at Cambridge, has frequently acknowledged to me, with tears of gratitude, that, had it not been for Mr. Hall's ministry, he should have become a Socinian, if not an infidel. I visited him in his last illness, which I think was in 1817. He died in the faith.

Many of the young men who had been trained up under the instruction of Mr. Hall's predecessor, were also skeptically inclined. They formed themselves into a society for the purpose of discussing controverted points; and shortly afterward the orthodox party was joined by Mr., afterward Dr. Gregory, who ably contended for the *faith once delivered to the saints*. Mr. Hall being desirous to obtain some information respecting Mr. Gregory, as a new-comer with whom I had been intimate, inquired my opinion of him; I replied in terms of the warmest approbation. From this period Dr. Gregory enjoyed a large share in his affections.

It was under these circumstances that Mr. Hall's great usefulness at Cambridge was apparent. I frequently reminded him of this when he lamented to me in private the little success that, in his opinion, attended his ministry.

Mr. Hall was at this time a bachelor between thirty and forty years of age, and occupied two rooms belonging to Mr. Lucas Ray, in the Petty Cury, which he held till about 1803. His sitting-room, which was also his study, was unusually large—I think about forty feet by twenty-five, and very lofty. It had two large windows looking into St. Andrew's churchyard, with the tower opposite, which was unfortunate for his peculiar turn of mind. In this room we have spent to-

gether many sacred and delightful evenings, the grateful remembrance of which I shall never lose.

His habits were very studious: I never knew any man that was so great a reader on all subjects. It is a mistaken notion that he was entirely indebted to genius; he possessed great industry and application, united to which was a thirst for knowledge, and an ambition to excel in every thing which he undertook. Dissatisfied with present attainments, he frequently said, "Let your aim and standard be high, for you will always be below your standard; and if your standard is high, your attainments will be high also." He generally read from an early hour of the morning till eight o'clock in the evening, after which he visited either the sick or his friends. If one was engaged or from home, he went to another, and stayed till eleven o'clock—then returned to his rooms. It was pleasing, on such occasions, to witness this great man descend from the sublimest speculations, and mingle with the socialities of common life. There was no ostentatious display of learning; he endeared himself to all by the simplicity of his manners, the unaffected modesty and kindness of his disposition, and the interest which he took in their welfare. He was exceedingly fond of children, and frequently took the little ones in his arms, and appeared to enter into all their amusements. Under these circumstances, it will not appear surprising that his visits were anticipated with earnestness and delight.

In addition to the usual services at his own place, Mr. Hall frequently preached a third time on the Sabbath to the villagers near Cambridge. I can mention nothing which more clearly shows the state of things at this period than the benighted condition of these poor people. They were indeed ignorant and out of the way—*without God, and without hope in the world.* The ministers of Episcopacy of various orders were permitted to live in idleness and luxury, while the peasantry around them were perishing *for lack of knowledge*, and this, too, in the immediate neighbourhood of the schools of divinity and the storehouses of learning. I have frequently heard Mr. Hall preach in the cottages of these villagers, whose hearts burned within them while he *opened to them the Scriptures.*

I well remember walking on a Sunday evening with a friend to Coten, one mile from Cambridge, for the purpose of hearing Mr. Hall. On entering the village, we met a man (who, from his appearance, we concluded was a herdsman) driving his cows from the common. We inquired for the house where Mr. Hall was engaged to preach. He replied in a rude and surly manner. I afterward found that he was the rector of the parish, a fellow of Catharine Hall, Cambridge, and one of his majesty's Whitehall preachers!

The members of the church at Cambridge were at this time nearly equally divided between Baptists and Pædobaptists. Mr. Hall's practice of open communion, and his want of zeal on the subject of baptism, were censured by some of his brethren of the stricter sort: this induced him, some years afterward, to enter largely into the controversy—Hall *versus* Kinghorn. As a powerful argument, however, in favour of the

liberal plan of mixed communion, I can certify that there never has been any unpleasant feeling in the church at Cambridge, arising from the union. When appealing to this, Mr. Hall frequently said, *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* He lived to see the practice more generally adopted in the Baptist churches.

This leads me to mention an anecdote which he related to me after dining with Dr. Porteus, the late Bishop of London, who had previously expressed to the Rev. John Owen, secretary to the Bible Society, a great desire to have an interview with Mr. Hall. The bishop, in the course of conversation, asked him what was the reason the members of his sect were called Anabaptists: Mr. Hall politely satisfied the bishop. In a subsequent conversation, Mr. H. observed to me, "Sir, I was surprised beyond measure that the bishop should put such a question to me; it was hardly courteous, and therefore difficult to answer with propriety: he ought to have known, from Church history, that it was a calumny and term of reproach first given to the Munster Baptists, on account of their excesses, which stigma we labour under from them: if not, his Greek should have informed him that *ἄνα* denotes *repetition.* Now, sir, you know Baptists do not believe that infant sprinkling is any baptism at all; therefore it cannot be said that *we* baptize twice, or do the thing again." In every other respect he was much pleased with the piety and the kindness of the bishop; and the bishop expressed to Mr. Owen, in the warmest terms, his admiration of the extraordinary talents of Mr. Hall.

As his time was generally occupied, I was fearful of encroaching by too frequently calling without a previous invitation. Scarcely a fortnight elapsed, however, without his inviting me to visit him at eight or nine o'clock, "to eat a bit of bread and cheese." After an hour's conversation on general subjects, on the books I had read, or the sermons I had heard, he reached down a favourite author, and read aloud a few of the finest passages, in order to awaken curiosity, or excite a taste for reading. Among others, I may mention more particularly the works of Bourdalou, Massillon, and Bossuet. As I was ignorant of the original, he translated it into beautiful English, page after page, without the least hesitation; then, as if conscious of having performed a feat, he laughed heartily, and appeared pleased with my expressions of astonishment and delight. He also directed my attention to books suitable for my perusal, in English. Among others which he lent me were Lord Bacon's Essays. After reading the preface, he made comments: "There, sir, no man but Lord Bacon could say this: 'As to the Latin edition of these Essays, it will last as long as books last.' Why, sir, it would be the greatest vanity and presumption in any other man to say this of his own work." Then he read the following striking passage from the first Essay, on Truth: "It is a pleasure to stand on the shore, and to see ships tossed upon the sea: a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle, and to see a battle, and the adventurers thereof, below: but no pleasure is comparable to the standing on the vantage ground of truth (a hill not to be commanded, and where the

air is always clear and serene), and to see the errors, and wanderings, and mists, and tempests in the vale below; so always that this prospect be with pity, and not with swelling or pride. Certainly it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth." He repeated the last sentence, "'*Turn upon the poles of truth!*' How beautiful! There, sir, I will lend you that; but remember, you must not keep Lord Bacon more than a fortnight, for there is scarcely a week in which I do not want to consult or refer to him." Another work which he recommended was Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Dying. After having read to me some of the most beautiful passages, he again limited the time, assigning the same reason as before. He also lent to me the original edition of Baxter's Saint's Rest, with Howe's Blessedness of the Righteous, and urgently recommended Dr. Doddridge's Sermon to Young People, "Christ formed in the soul as the only and eternal hope of glory." Indeed, so high was his opinion of this discourse, that he once actually delivered it publicly from memory on a Sabbath afternoon.

Mr. Hall considered that Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations was founded on sure principles, which every man of business ought to study. He used to say, "Task yourself to fifty pages a day, sir, and secure the interstices of your time, and you will be astonished how much reading you will get through in a year." Another maxim which Mr. Hall frequently urged was, "Do a thing well, whatever it may be, and then learn to do it in the least possible time." And farther, "Whatever bad habit you have acquired, practise the opposite, and you will soon find the good principle increase from the exercise."

Another work which he recommended was Doddridge's Evidences of Christianity; this he considered a better book, in some respects, than Paley's, particularly for young persons who had some religious knowledge. He would not allow of indiscriminate reading on the Sabbath, but prescribed, in addition to the Bible, what may be called Sunday books, such as were either devotional, or had an aspect and bearing upon religion: Barrow's Sermons, Saurin's, &c.; the Evidences of Christianity, Church History, and Religious Biography.

Mr. Hall's plan of reading was different from that of Dr. Johnson and some other great men. He generally read regularly through a book, but with great rapidity. Speaking to him one day on the comparative merits of the Rambler and the Spectator, I expressed my preference for the Rambler. "Yes, sir, so do most young persons; but when you arrive at my age you will prefer the Spectator; there is a pomp and swell in the rounded periods of Johnson, but a beauty, simplicity, and true taste in Addison."

About this time I studied Gurney's System of Short Hand, which enabled me to furnish Mr. Hall with an account of any minister who supplied the pulpit during his absence. On his return, he usually inquired what had been the text, in what manner it had been divided, &c., &c., and then added a few remarks, either in commendation or otherwise, frequently suggesting improvements, and stating the man-

ner in which he would have treated the subject. Mr. Hall was a very candid hearer, being always more inclined to approve than to censure. He considered that the late Rev. T. N. Toller and the Rev. A. Fuller, of Kettering, were the two best preachers of the age.

I shall never forget the enthusiasm with which he spoke of a sermon preached at Bedford by Mr. Toller, from 2 Pet., i., 12–15. "Sir," said he, "if the Angel Gabriel had come down from heaven on purpose, he could not have preached a more solemn and impressive discourse; it was like a dying minister preaching his last sermon; it quite overcame me—there was scarcely a dry eye to be seen in the place."*

When at Cambridge, Mr. Hall generally expounded the Scriptures on a Sabbath morning, and preached from a single text in the afternoon; the exposition generally suggested a subject for the sermon. I found him expounding the Gospel of John, afterward the Acts of the Apostles, then he went to the Epistle to the Philippians, and the two Epistles of Peter; the three Epistles of John closed his labours at Cambridge, previously to his indisposition. I preserved the leading ideas in his exposition of the Epistle to the Philippians, making more than one hundred pages of post paper, since written out into long hand, which I consider a great treasure. I inquired his reason for omitting the Epistle to the Romans; he replied, "I do not understand it, sir. The Apostle Peter says, there are *many things hard to be understood:* I shall reserve the exposition of that Epistle for the last work of my life."

He had only one service during the week at Cambridge, which was held between the hours of seven and eight on Thursday evenings. His custom was to sit in an arm-chair in the vestry, to read a hymn, which was sung; then he requested one of the members of the church to pray: after this, name another hymn, and make some observations on one or more verses from the Scripture, for about twenty minutes, he then concluded the service himself by a short prayer. He frequently read the following hymn from Dr. Doddridge at the commencement of these services:

"Eternal God, our wondering souls
Admire thy matchless grace,
That thou wilt walk, that thou wilt dwell
With Adam's worthless race.

* * * * * * *

Joyful my spirit will consent
To drop its mortal load;
And hail the sharpest pangs of death
That break its way to God."

The sentiment expressed in the two last lines he experienced in his dying moments. He literally "hailed the sharpest pangs of death, to break his way to God."

Another of his favourite hymns on these occasions was Dr. Watts's hymn which commences thus:

* See Mr. Hall's own account of this sermon in his Memoir of Mr. Toller, vol. ii., p. 394, 395, in this edition of his works.—B.

"Thy favours, Lord, surprise our souls;
Will the Eternal dwell with us?
What canst thou find beneath the poles
To tempt thy chariot downward thus?"

At this period he frequently lost sight of the lecture. After waiting some time, I have often left the vestry, and ran to his rooms to fetch him; on entering, I found him in the midst of his books. Instantly after an "How do you do, sir?" I said, "It is Thursday evening, sir, and the people are waiting for you at the vestry." "Oh no, it is impossible, sir; it cannot be Thursday." "Indeed it is, sir." Then, rising up, "Well, how strange it is, sir, that I cannot remember the days of the week; they are all alike to me, sir; I have nothing to mark and distinguish them." The distance from his rooms was not five minutes' walk from the meeting-house; he usually found that one of the deacons had commenced so that not much time was lost.

I shall now briefly notice the peculiar situation in which the Dissenters were placed, and the difficulties they then had to encounter. They were at this period very unpopular, from their decided attachment to the great principles of civil and religious liberty, and their opposition to the Pitt administration and to the French war. There was the University on the one side, with Mr. Pitt for its representative, and a corrupt corporation on the other, with the Duke of Rutland at the head, both of which were leagued together to put down the principles of liberty, and to support corruption and war, while the Dissenters were contending for peace and reform. The contest was so unequal, that it seemed at one time almost impossible that we should keep our ground, much less that we should finally triumph. We were assailed from every quarter with accusations of disloyalty, and of being enemies to "Church and State." This was carried so far as to insult us when we walked the streets. Though a small band, we were, however, firm and united: there was not a single individual in the whole congregation who did not warmly espouse the "good old cause." This, with such a powerful advocate and leader as Mr. Hall, ensured for us the victory; especially as many of the Dissenters were men of the largest property, as well as of talent and respectability, in the town. Thus we kept bigotry and intolerance at bay. Mr. Hall, however, never introduced his politics into the pulpit, although he was falsely charged with doing so by a clergyman of the University, who had the mortification, to my certain knowledge, afterward to make the *amende honorable*. His printed letter to Mr. Simeon, as well as his letter to Mr. Clayton,* and his Apology for the Freedom of the Press, will show how firmly he embraced and

* The reference here made by Mr. Greene is to the first article in the second volume of this edition of Mr. Hall's works. Mr. Clayton, for very many years, was pastor of the Weigh House Congregational Church in the city of London, over which the Rev. Thomas Binney at present ably presides. Mr. Clayton was so ill-advised as to print, in 1790, a sermon far more suitable for a dignitary of an established church, and a follower of Sacheverel, to deliver than an humble dissenting minister. It is truly gratifying to me to add, that this venerable minister of Christ lived to see and to regret his former mistakes, and to give full evidence of possessing more enlightened views of freedom than those he once cherished. He died in 1843, at the advanced age of more than ninety years.—B.

upheld those noble principles for which our forefathers fought and suffered.

"Which make man, man;
The wise illumine—aggrandize the great."

I remember a county meeting for the dismissal of the Pitt administration, headed by the late Duke of Bedford and the Dissenters. Mr. Hall attended both the meeting and the dinner, and assisted in escorting and defending a small party on their return.

In reference to many of these persecuting "Church-and-King" men, we have frequently observed to each other, *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* Many an imperious University man, who, by his look of contempt, appeared to expect that every Dissenter should do him homage, and who spoke of Mr. Hall as *one* Hall preaching in a conventicle, has departed from the place into a state of obscurity and insignificance, "alike unknowing and unknown," while the name of Robert Hall is known, revered, and admired wherever the English language is spoken or read, and will be to the end of time. *I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.* This has frequently reminded me of a fine stroke of satire given us by Mr. Hall, when expounding that part of the Acts of the Apostles which refers to Festus's declaration of Paul's case to Agrippa, Acts, xxv., 19: *But had certain questions against him of their own superstitions, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.* "Observe," said Mr. Hall, "the contemptuous manner in which this Festus speaks of the Saviour of the world, as '*one* Jesus' which was dead. It is very remarkable that this *one* Festus owes all his celebrity to this *one* Jesus; for had it not been for this *one* Jesus, we should never have heard anything of this *one* Festus, for his name is never mentioned in profane history."

None of the foregoing remarks apply, however, to that excellent nobleman, Lord Hardwicke, nor to the late Dr. Mansel, who, when in possession of high university honours, treated Mr. Hall in the kindest manner, and decidedly opposed this rude conduct. Mr. Hall told me, that after he had published his sermon on "Modern Infidelity," when walking by Addenbroke's Hospital, Dr. Mansel crossed over from the other side of the road, and, shaking him by the hand, said, "Mr. Hall, I thank you most sincerely for your masterly sermon; it does you great honour, sir." Mr. Hall said this was so unexpected that he did not recollect how he answered the doctor, but politely thanked him for his good opinion.

His popularity now increased so much in Cambridge, that I have seen forty or fifty under-graduates, fellow-commoners, and noblemen, in their costume, at the meeting-house. Some of the heads of houses were alarmed at this popularity, and made an attempt to prevent the attendance of the young gentlemen. At a meeting on the subject, Dr. Mansel, as Master of Trinity College, rose and said, "I will never be a party to any such measure as this; I think the young men can-

not spend their time better on a Sunday than going to hear Robert Hall; and were it not for the dignity of my situation as master, I should go and hear him myself." This at once stopped the proceeding.

Among others who were almost constant in their attendance at this time, were two Mr. Grants,* who are now, I believe, both members of Parliament and ministers of the crown; together with a clergyman, who has since distinguished himself as the author of the Velvet Cushion. They were generally accommodated in one of the best seats in the place, belonging to E. Hollick, Esq., a country gentleman. I mention this, because Mr. Hall and ourselves considered it very ungenerous on the part of the reverend gentleman that he should afterward have lampooned the Dissenters, by saying "that Dissenterism was the religion of barns," while he would not acknowledge that he was indebted to one of these *barns*, and to Mr. Hall's ministry while at Cambridge. The place, it is true, was a very plain building, not like King's College Chapel or a cathedral, but then we *paid for it ourselves*. After this ungenerous attack, I inquired of the deacons whether this gentleman had ever subscribed anything; they told me he never had. I asked whether he had ever made Mr. Hall a present; and the answer was the same. Under these circumstances, it has appeared to us that the attack was neither in good taste nor good keeping. If Dissenterism is the religion of "*barns*," who occasioned it? Who forced our ancestors to worship in "dens and caves, and *barns* of the earth?" The predecessors of this gentleman, who, by their cruel edict of uniformity, in the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar, condemned those who would not conform, and bow down, and worship, to be cast out, which was actually carried into effect on August 24th, 1662,† which we Dissenters justly denominate "Black Bartholomew Day." By this unmerciful edict, it is well known that nearly 2300 faithful ministers of the Gospel were ejected from the Church of England; and it is affirmed, upon a modest calculation, that it procured the untimely deaths of 3000 Nonconformists, and the ruin of 60,000 families.‡ *In her is found the blood of saints and of prophets.* This is a blot and stain in the history of the Church, which, to use Lord Chatham's words, "all the waters of the Delaware will never wash out."

Mr. Hall was by no means insensible of these supercilious airs of consequence and lordly superiority over God's heritage. It was a kind of "stand by, for I am holier than thou;" while, at the same time, there was no extraordinary merit to justify this. Such persons know nothing of the native dignity of a genuine Puritan, who was conscious of obeying the will of his Master, whose *kingdom is not of this world.* It is to the noble army of the Puritans, or, as Mr. Hall termed them, the "celestial nobility," that this country is chiefly indebted for its invaluable liberties, in the stand they made against the arbitrary power

* One of them is the present Lord Glenelg.—B.

† See Dr. Calamy's account; Brook's History of the Puritans; Palmer's Nonconformists' Memorial, &c.

‡ I have also had oral testimony of this fact. My mother, who died last year [1833], at eighty-six, actually received, when a child, a circumstantial account from her grandmother, who was one of those pious worthies and sufferers.—GREENE

and encroachments of the clergy. Mr. Hall declined very high preferment in the Church from Mr. Pitt, and Dr. Barrington, bishop of Durham: he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the highest honours for a season; for he had *respect unto the recompense of reward*. He frequently armed himself and animated his followers with the anticipations of *future* blessedness. Well do I remember his preaching from those words, *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*. "This great event," said he, "is reserved for the excellent of the earth, of whom the world is not worthy. It will soon be their turn to shine; then shall all other lights be put out to make room for the brightness and splendour of their appearing: *they shall shine for ever and for ever*."

Every one who has heard Mr. Hall give out a hymn, will recollect the dignity and feeling he would exhibit in reading the following lines from Dr. Doddridge, at the close of the service:

> "The splendid crown which Moses sought
> Still beams around his brow,
> Though soon great Pharaoh's sceptred pride
> Was taught by death to bow."

It may be proper for me here to observe, that, notwithstanding the contumelies to which I have referred, Mr. Hall had many friends and admirers in the Establishment, who were greatly attached to him: who fully appreciated his excellences, and who could estimate his conscientious objections as a Dissenter, without imputing to him factious motives. Among these was the Rev. Thomas Robinson, of Leicester. His splendid eulogium on that clergyman will be found among his printed works.* Many persons have imagined, from the high opinion he expressed of this gentleman a few years afterward, and his panegyric on the Liturgy of the Church of England, that he relaxed in his principles as a Dissenter; but I have heard him say repeatedly, that he was very sorry such a construction should ever have been put on what he intended only, abstractedly, as his opinion of the composition, and not as an approval of its adoption in preference to extemporaneous prayer. I can testify that Mr. Hall never changed his political opinions, as expressed in the "Apology for the Freedom of the Press;"† nor were his decided objections to the *hierarchy* of the Church of England ever removed, being, in his opinion, antichristian.

The learned Dr. Parr frequently visited him at Cambridge, and afterward at Leicester, and fully appreciated both his principles and

* Vol. ii., p. 380-387, of this edition.—B.

As one illustration, among many others, of the unaltered character of Mr. Hall's *political* sentiments, it may be mentioned that, when he was told of the famous declaration of the Duke of Wellington, that there needed no parliamentary reform, and that there should be none, he replied, "Why, sir, he deserves to be tied to the tail of a comet, and whipped round infinite space throughout eternity."—B.

† On the republication of this pamphlet in the year 1825, one passage in the prefatory remarks was *omitted*, which referred to the late learned Bishop Horsley. Mr. Hall told me that mature reflection by no means justified this attack upon so distinguished a scholar and so profound a divine. It was as follows: "When we reflect on the qualities which distinguish this prelate, that venom that hisses, and that meanness that creeps, the malice that attends him to the sanctuary, and pollutes the altar, we feel a similar perplexity with that which springs from the origin of evil. But if we recollect, on the other hand, that instruction may be conveyed by negatives, and that the union, in one character, of nearly all the dispositions human nature *ought not to possess*, may be a useful warning, at least we shall cease to wonder at the existence and elevation of Dr. Horsley. Characters of his stamp, like a plague or a tempest, may have their uses in the general system, if they recur not too often."—GREENE.

talents. About this time the doctor printed his celebrated Spital Sermon, which contains the following eulogium upon his friend: "In common with all men of letters, I read, with exquisite delight, Mr. Hall's sermon, lately published, on Modern Infidelity; he has all the eloquence of an orator, the fancy of a poet, the acuteness of a schoolman, the profoundness of a philosopher, and the piety of a saint." To this testimony Dr. Parr has added another, in the following clause of his last will, which extract Mr. Hall showed to me at the time; it was sent in a note, with the ring, by Dr. Parr's executors: "I bequeath a mourning-ring to the Rev. Robert Hall, as a mark of my reverence for his exemplary virtues, and of my admiration of his sublime and hallowed eloquence."

Sir James Mackintosh, who was a fellow-student with Mr. Hall in Scotland, several times visited him at Cambridge with Dr. Parr. Mr. Hall entertained the highest opinion of Sir James's talents, and frequently said to me that he had the greatest intellect of any man he ever knew: "Sir, I was astonished when at college at the facility with which Mackintosh acquired his knowledge; such was his quickness of perception, that he was not obliged to read half so much as I was. Sir, his conversation on the most difficult and metaphysical subjects is so correct, that you might print after him. Persons have no conception what a profound thinker he is, sir." The public are fully aware that Sir James entertained a not less exalted opinion of Mr. Hall.*

There was, about the year 1800, a very unpleasant affair, which much disturbed Mr. Hall's peace of mind, and occasioned a paper war between himself and Mr. Benjamin Flower, who officiated in giving out the hymns at the meeting-house; it ended in a separation. Mr. Hall read to me all his letters, and I heard all the answers: the last two letters, I think, filled fourteen pages of post paper, on the part of

* One of the visits of Sir James Mackintosh to Leicester, to visit his friend Hall, was followed by an incident which furnished a striking illustration of the ingenious manner in which Mr. Hall could rebuke vanity and conceit, evils which he detested almost more than anything else.

There lived in the neighbourhood a minister of another denomination, a worthy little man, of an amiable disposition, but unhappily conceited to a degree which even Mr. Hall could not cure. He would perpetually intrude himself into Mr. H.'s company, and occupy his time to an extent often painful, and then go into other circles and boast of his intimacy with Mr. Hall! On one Saturday morning, he begged permission to see him for a moment or two, *on important business*. Having gained access to his study, the little man began to make an apology for the intrusion, and to say that, being in the town, he thought he must call to see his friend Hall, &c. Mr. Hall stopped him in the midst of his harangue, and said, "My dear friend, do not apologize; I am glad to see you; indeed, I never was more delighted to see a man in my life. Why, sir, I had Sir James Mackintosh here till three o'clock this morning, and his conversation, sir, has absolutely carried me away to the third heavens. Why, sir, it is more than I can sustain. I am glad *you* are come, for *you* will soon compel me to feel that I am yet among the creeping things of the earth."

Even this, however, did not cure the vanity of little Mr. H. Shortly after, I was present in a large company of ministers, when he again began, "Mr. Hall, you have not heard me preach for some time." "No, sir, I think not. How long is it since?" "Two years, sir. I wish you could hear me again; I think you would say I have greatly improved." "Well, sir, perhaps so. I remember very little about your sermon, but I distinctly recollect that I thought there was plenty of room for improvement." "Yes, sir, and I am sure you would now be satisfied." Mr. Hall was now roused, and he began to pour down upon him torrents of sarcasm. "Indeed, H.—indeed! Well, two years since you were a very pretty butterfly; by this time you are a sweet singing canary: yes, you were then a farthing squib; now, no doubt, you are quite a sixpenny blunderbuss: two years ago you rose six inches above the earth; now I suppose you soar to the very stars;" thus he proceeded till even poor H. blushed, and some of us learned an important lesson from the miserable figure he was made to appear. But, "though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him" Poor H. went away, and boasted, as usual, of his intimacy with Mr. Hall, relating this conversation as a proof of the kind feelings which existed between them.—B.

Mr. Hall, and as many pages foolscap from Mr. Flower. It became an affair of character; but Mr. Hall, in the opinion of his friends, completely triumphed; yet for a time it affected his tranquillity exceedingly. After this circumstance, he resumed the giving out of hymns himself. His partiality for the poetry of Dr. Watts was great, and he frequently expressed his surprise at the taste of his Baptist brethren, in introducing Dr. Rippon's collection, which he generally found tended to *supersede* the use of Dr. Watts. His opinion was, that Dr. Rippon's selection was very well suited to the closet and to family worship, but not adapted for congregational use. This decided objection to Supplements continued the same when at Bristol. He regretted that the friends at Broadmead had introduced a collection, which was too frequently used to the exclusion of Dr. Watts. He had a similar partiality as to tunes: he loved the good old tunes, such as are still sung in the Church of England: he preferred congregational singing, unaccompanied by musical instruments, and mentioned his old place at Cambridge as a pattern of simplicity. "Sir," he would say, "I have been quite delighted with it; everybody sings there; and the effect of so many voices joining in praise was quite inspiriting to me, and often produced a good frame of mind."

Mr. Hall was in the habit of adapting his discourses to particular occasions in a very remarkable manner. The following circumstance occurred about this period: Two men were executed at Cambridge for uttering forged Bank of England notes. Mr. H. attended them during their imprisonment, and received their confession. It appeared, on their trial, that they were apprehended for passing one of the five-pound notes at a shop in Cambridge. On the person who took it expressing some doubts, and giving it to his servant for the purpose of making inquiries at the bank, the unfortunate man immediately seized the note and swallowed it. The man who actually *forged* the notes and employed them was admitted king's evidence, and convicted them. After the execution, Mr. Hall gave notice that he should improve the event by way of caution and instruction. He took his text from Job, xx., 12–16: *Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth: yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him. He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly. He shall suck the poison of asps: the* viper's tongue *shall slay him.**

The men confessed to Mr. Hall that they were drawn aside from the paths of virtue by breaking the Sabbath, by stealing little things, and by vicious company.

As an expositor, Mr. Hall stood pre-eminent. He has frequently regretted to me the taste of the age in departing from ancient practice, by preferring single texts of Scripture. "There is more excitement," said he, "produced by a sermon, but less instruction derived."

* The notes of this sermon may be found in a subsequent part of this volume.—B.

It will be seen in the sequel how much his preference and inclination in this respect were checked while at Leicester.

The plan which he adopted when the subject admitted of it, instead of paraphrasing every verse, was to take a number of verses in their course, and form them into a pleasing and instructive order. The following I find among my notes, which I give as a short specimen:

October 27th, 1799. The 14th chapter of John, from the 15th verse to the end. He observed the subject was so miscellaneous, that he should reduce it to the following order:

1. Here is a test of love proposed by Jesus Christ to his disciples: *If you love me, keep my commandments.*

2. The advantages attending it: *And I will love him, and will manifest myself to him, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

3. Here is a gracious promise of the Divine Spirit as a Comforter: *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

4. Jesus Christ here promises to see them again in a short time: *Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you,* &c., &c.

5. He leaves them a rich legacy, which was peace: observe His tenderness and compassion. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.* Not sparingly, or by way of compliment. *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

6. He reasons with them on their unwillingness that he should leave them: *If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.*

7. His tranquillity in the near approach of death, and His entire submission to the will of His Father: *For the Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*

(1.) This subject, on the whole, should teach us Christian virtue;

(2.) Patience under afflictive dispensations;

And (3.) To rejoice in the legacy which Christ has left us. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.*

Mr. Hall's plans of sermons were always remarkable for their simplicity. The view which he took of his subject was so easy and natural, that persons felt surprised that they had not considered it in the same light before. There was seldom anything very extraordinary in his introductions; but when he kindled with his subject, he introduced the most brilliant passages with so great a rapidity, that it was impossible ever to take them down: they were, in fact, quite overpowering.

His imagination was *now* his distinguishing faculty; there was nothing after his illness, in splendour of imagery, equal to the productions of this period, which were superior to anything in Burke or Jeremy Taylor.

At the beginning of a new year, it was his practice to fix upon a subject very appropriate to the lapse of time. I shall never forget the effect produced by his sermon, January 4th, 1801, from the forty-seventh chapter of Genesis, and ninth verse: *And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.* He took up the general idea which Jacob gives of life as a pilgrimage; and, secondly, the description of this pilgrimage: it is brief in its duration, and replete with trouble, &c., &c. And in the afternoon he continued the idea, with remarks on entering upon a new century: at the close of his discourse, he burst forth in a most solemn and awakening manner, with a heart deeply affected, of which the following sketch may give some slight idea: "We have now entered, my brethren, upon a new century of time; before fifty years of it are passed, most of us here will either have seen God face to face, or have been banished forever from his presence. If we die in the Lord, nothing will then remain for us but holiness. The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, will all have passed away: there will be nothing but God, and Christ, and heaven, and eternity." And then he gave out his favourite 90th Psalm, by Dr. Watts:

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home."

Mr. Hall had a great insight into character; his eye appeared so searching to strangers as to be almost insupportable: their brightness was insufferable. I have frequently heard it remarked, both by ladies and gentlemen, that, until they became acquainted with him, they felt uncomfortable in his presence: he appeared to them as a discerner of the spirits. He considered himself to be a judge of physiognomy. The following is a remarkable instance of his penetration in this respect, which was much talked of at the time. I received the particulars from Mr. James Nutter, at whose house it occurred. A London dealer in the corn-trade dined with this gentleman at Cambridge, in company with Mr. Hall. Mr. Nutter observed that Mr. Hall was very silent at table, and looked very suspiciously at this stranger. After two or three glasses of wine, the stranger retired hastily. On his leaving the room, Mr. Hall said, "Who is that person, sir?" Mr. Nutter informed him that he was an eminent corn-dealer from London. "Do you do any business with him, sir?" "Yes, sir." "Have you sold him anything to-day, sir?" "Yes, sir, a large quantity of corn." "I am sorry for it, sir; that man is a rogue, sir." "Oh, you are quite mistaken, Mr. Hall; he is highly respectable, sir, and can obtain credit for any amount in this market." "I do not care for that, sir; do you get your account settled as soon as you can, and never do any more business with him." Although Mr. Nutter saw no other reason for it, Mr. Hall's opinion made that impression on his mind,

that when this account was settled, he refused to trust the individual any more; and in about twelve months afterward, this very person actually defrauded his creditors and fled the country.*

Mr. Hall's hearers became now so numerous, that it was found necessary to enlarge the meeting-house, in order to afford comfortable accommodation to about eight hundred persons: the whole of the expense, which amounted to about £1000, was instantly contributed by a few opulent individuals in the congregation. During the enlargement, we were accommodated by Mr. Hall preaching, in the afternoon and evening, at the Independent Meeting-house, which was kindly granted for about three months. The enlarged place was very soon afterward completely filled.†

I am now approaching the period in which Mr. Hall was visited with one of the heaviest calamities which can afflict human nature; there were some previous circumstances, connected with his peculiar habits and situation, to which it may be traced. It was preceded by a depressed state of mind, which may in some measure be attributed to early impressions of dislike to the open situation of the town and country. At that time the neighbourhood was unenclosed.‡ "Sir, he has frequently said, "you cannot conceive how it lowered my spirits when I first came into the county at Royston. The whole aspect was so cheerless, so flat and monotonous, I thought I never could live in it. It is a perfect contrast, sir, to the neighbourhood of Bristol; the scenery there, sir, is so bold and gigantic, you can form no conception of it. It excites the sublimest emotions; it would inspire a poet, and furnish him with the finest images that can be produced from nature, particularly the grandeur of the rocks about Clifton; whereas, here, there is nothing to enliven the spirits; when you walk out, it looks like nature *laid out*, sir. It is a remarkable fact, that there are more suicides committed in Cambridgeshire than in any other county in the kingdom. Why, sir, in the fens, many, when they are low-spirited, you find, will either drink, hang, or drown themselves, to get rid of the feeling.◊ Besides this, sir, I do not think my

* An instance of a similar kind, in which Mr. Hall showed his intuitive knowledge of character, occurred within my own observation. I met him in a dinner party, and in the course of the afternoon, pointing to an individual near the bottom of the table, he asked, "Who is that man, sir?" I replied, "His name is ——, and he resides at ——." "Not a minister, I hope, sir?" he asked. "Yes, sir, he is pastor of —— church." "The Lord have mercy upon his poeple!" said he. "Why, sir?" I asked. "Oh, sir," he replied, "I would not on any account think anything bad about him, nor would I for the world say that he is a rogue; but, sir, he has got the most perfect convict's face I ever saw in my life. I would not walk three yards with him in the dark." In a few months afterward the character of this man was developed as a consummate villain.—B.

† A few years since, the house of worship was rebuilt on an enlarged scale and in a beautiful style. The whole was paid for before the congregation entered it; but as it was judged desirable to cherish the spirit of liberality usually manifested at the opening of houses of worship, the late excellent Rev. John Dyer, the valued secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, preached at its dedication, and collected for that institution, the congregation showing the spirit of the ancient Jews, who ate the fat, and drank the sweet, and sent portions to those for whom nothing had been prepared.—B.

‡ Dr. Clarke, in his Travels in Russia, compared that part of the country which lies between Cambridge and Newmarket to the flat, unvaried appearance of the steppes in Russia.—GREENE.

◊ I once had the pleasure of dining with Mr. Hall about twelve miles from Cambridge, in the Isle of Ely, situated in that county, and having frequently heard of his dislike to the district, was disposed to hear his own account of the matter. I began the conversation by the remark, "We are in a very interesting neighbourhood, sir." "What do you mean, sir? Here are the fen-ditches [marshes] overflowing with Antinomianism, and the natural scenery is nature laid out. The whole is desolation. Where is the interest, sir?" I replied, "Why, sir, you seem to have forgotten that

preaching does much good, there are so few of the respectable part of the congregation and of the young people that come forward to join the church." "But you have had great additions, sir," I replied, "from the middling and lower classes, and the hearers have more than doubled since I came; and it is not right, sir, to prescribe to the Divine Being in what way your preaching should be most useful: we hear nothing of Socinianism now, sir. You don't know all the good you may have done, sir, in that respect." "Very true, sir. Well, sir, if I do not leave the people, I must go and take a house at Shelford: that is a very pleasant village, sir."

"I do not write any of my sermons now, sir; I will tell you how I manage. I generally decide upon my text on Monday morning for the next Sabbath; and I know my course in the exposition for the morning. I make my sermon when I walk before dinner, and get the subject well fixed on my mind at these intervals; but since the gownsmen have come so much to meeting, they stare at me when I am walking, and whisper, 'That is Hall, who preaches at the meeting in St. Andrew's-street.' I do not mean they behave rudely, but it is an unpleasant interruption while I am pursuing a pleasing thought, or working up a passage. I cannot find a solitary walk about Cambridge."

His belief in apparitions now increased; he laid hold with eagerness of every tale of this kind. There was a report of a supernatural appearance, with a lambent flame issuing from its wings, at Gerard's Hostel Bridge. He told me that he went one night, with another gentleman, at twelve o'clock, to see the spectre, but was disappointed. It turned out to be a sad trick by a mischievous gownsman, who had a pair of wings over his white surplice, with a phosphorus box, &c. However, he actually frightened a poor postboy into fits. I believe the gownsman was afterward rusticated, if not expelled. Another evening, when sitting alone with him in his rooms, the situation of which I have described, looking into the churchyard, he said, very gravely, "Sir, I have actually seen stones rising from those graves in rapid succession, and beat against the church tower like boys playing at fives or tennis; and I have frequently got up from my books to look, sir, but I could not see anybody. Is not this very strange, sir; how can you account for it? Then, again, sir, you know I always hang the key of my room on that nail where you see it, and I have frequently seen it vibrate for some time." I dared not smile, as he was so serious; and there was no reasoning with him on the subject. Once, however, I ventured to do it. We supped together at the house of a mutual friend; the servant being engaged, the lady went into the cellar to draw some beer, which Mr. Hall observed: "Why, ma'am, have you been into the cellar at this time of night?" "Yes, sir."

our friend. Andrew Fuller, the antagonist of Antinomianism, was born within three miles of this spot." "You are right, sir; I thank you for reminding me of a fact which I had entirely forgotten." His manner then became considerably excited, and his eyes kindled with interest as he asked, "Do you remember, sir, what occurred at his birth?" "No, sir," I replied; "it was long before my time, and I have never heard of anything remarkable. What was it, sir?" "Why, sir, the fen-ditches were all convulsed, the earth shook to its very centre, and the devils ran frightened to one corner of hell."—B.

"Why, ma'am, I should have expected to have seen an apparition; you believe in such things, I hope, ma'am?" The lady, who was very timid, said, tremblingly, "Yes, sir." "That is right, ma'am; and I hope you inculcate the same notion into the minds of your children: I should, if I had any. The belief in spirits is very useful and salutary; it produces a tenderness of spirit and conscience, and will preserve them from materialism, skepticism, and infidelity." "Excuse me, sir," I ventured to say, "I do not think you would." "Why not, sir?" "Because you cannot give the twofold idea to children, that all spirits, good or bad, are under the power and control of a Superior Being; and if they were to see anything, they need not be frightened, for nothing could hurt them but by Divine permission." "That is very true, sir; but you find all infidels deny spiritual existence and supernatural appearances." There were many other circumstances which affected his mind, and brought on the lamentable crisis. To dissipate these feelings, he confined himself to his rooms, and took to a hard course of reading, and study of the Latin and Greek authors,* and seldom went out except to meeting. One evening, when I called upon him, he said, "I am glad you are come; I shall be glad of recreation; I have kept up my plan of set reading. Do you know, sir, for the last five or six weeks, I have read from five o'clock in the morning until seven or eight at night. I mean literally reading, sir, all that time, without ever going out, except now and then on an evening." He looked pale; I said, "Sir, you will injure your health by such hard study." "Oh, sir," he replied, "I find I am obliged to do so; I have no pleasure in walking out, and it occupies my mind: besides, sir, you know I have many reading men in my congregation, and I must keep the upper hand. I should not like any of my hearers to know more than myself. I have given up reading modern publications—they are so verbose, and I can get but few ideas from them; yet, when I take one up, I cannot lay it down till I have read it through, sir; then I am vexed and dissatisfied at the waste time: besides, I like to go to the originals, sir, and drink of the fountain of knowledge."

"I have had a return of that pain in my back, sir: I think I shall take to smoking. I began a few nights since, sir, and I will tell you how I managed. I smoked first for about five minutes, the next night for ten, and I did not feel any ill effects arising from it; but last night I tried to smoke for a quarter of an hour, sir, and it made me quite sick and giddy, and I thought I should have fallen out of my chair; but I mean to persevere and conquer it." This was the origin of his becoming such a confirmed smoker, although he was clean in the practice, never making use of a spittoon. It is well known by his friends that, in the latter period of his life, Mr. Hall was seldom without his pipe, not even on a journey; and he frequently had recourse to it during the night.

* On the last leaf of his Homer, now in the possession of the Rev. C. B. Woodman, is the following note, in Mr. Hall's handwriting: "N.B. I finished the *critical* perusal of Homer for the *second* time, Jan. 21st, 1801."—GREENE.

Shortly after this period he became restless and uneasy, and took a house at Shelford, four miles from Cambridge. A few months subsequently to this he was visited with his malady, which, I am persuaded, was chiefly brought on by the previous circumstances. His mind had been overstretched by intense study, and by his attempting to push inquiries beyond the confines of human knowledge; he found himself baffled with difficulties, and became irritated. I was prevented, by business, from seeing him so often at Shelford as when at Cambridge, which he seldom visited, except for the purpose of attending the prayer-meeting on Thursday, and the services of the Sabbath. He had a room within two doors of the meeting-house, to which he retired after morning service, at twelve o'clock until half past two, where he prepared for the afternoon. He took nothing but tea until he had finished his labours, and then went, first to one of our houses, then to another, and took his dinner and tea at the same time.

In one of my last visits to him at Shelford, I found him in very high spirits: he had been reading Foster's Essays. "There, sir," said he, "is a book—there has not been such a book printed for years—the writer is quite a master-spirit." This was church meeting night at Cambridge; and as Mr. Hall kept a horse, he rode back with me. He was proud of his riding, talked about it, and gave me a lesson in horsemanship, and related the feats he had performed when young. He certainly was a good rider, and sat well, until the disease in his back made the posture painful. I noticed a flightiness in his manner, but as his health was better, as well as his spirits, I did not expect that his mighty mind would be so soon laid in ruins. I requested him to print a sermon which he had preached some little time before. The text was 29th Deuteronomy, the last verse: *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.* "Why, sir, I did not reserve any notes of it; I almost forget it. Do you remember how I treated it, sir?" "Yes, sir, I think I can recollect. 1st, you noticed the decrees of the Divine Being; 2dly, the mysteries of Christian truth; 3dly, as applicable to the concerns of human life." "Ay, I remember it now, sir; I believe you are right." I again requested him to print it, and told him that I considered it to be one of the best sermons I ever heard him preach, particularly the latter part of it.* Here I reminded him of some of the remarks upon the duty of a reliance on Providence, in our ignorance of future life, &c., and named one instance where the sermon had been rendered useful. He replied, "Well, sir, I will think of it." Not many days after this we received the mournful intelligence of his being out of his mind, which threw all his friends into a state of the greatest consternation.

It was in November, 1804. Mr. Newton Bosworth, now of Tottenham,† who was an intimate friend of Mr. Hall, and F. Thackeray, M.D., of Cambridge, were frequently with him when he was seized; consequently, they know more of his state of mind during his restraint

* It may be found, printed from Mr. Greene's notes, in this volume.—B.

† At present labouring for the advancement of the cause of Christianity in Canada.—B.

at Shelford than any two persons now living. I have heard them say that, during his lucid intervals, he requested them to kneel down, when he prayed with the greatest eloquence and sublimity. Dr. Thackeray, who is a churchman, told me that the finest parts in the Liturgy were scarcely to be compared to these prayers.

I had long conceived, from the high opinion Mr. Hall frequently expressed of Sir James Mackintosh, that he had made him his model of intellectual greatness. As soon as I heard of this confinement, I went over; he was in bed. Being very ill, I heard, but could not see him. He was engaged in one continual stream of incoherent talk to himself in bed. I wept to hear him. He called upon Mackintosh: "I shall be greater than Mackintosh: greater than Mackintosh! I shall be greater than the angel Gabriel; I shall be next to the Lord Jesus Christ himself!"

It was determined by his friends at Cambridge that he should be sent to Dr. Arnold's infirmary at Leicester: he was accordingly conveyed to that institution in a postchaise the December following. The feeling of every heart was inconceivable. In the mean time, several respectable ministers at a distance offered their services to supply his pulpit, in the hope of his recovery, which were accepted.

Under these circumstances, it was deemed advisable, as Mr. Hall had no fortune, to commence a subscription, and make a grand effort to support him, rather than entail an annual expense on the congregation. Accordingly, with the generous assistance of some of his friends in London and other quarters, we immediately raised a fund of £2100, £1000 of which was sunk in an annuity of £100 a year for his life, and taken by several of his friends in Cambridge; the remaining £1100 was placed in the Navy five per cents., in the names of trustees, with a trust deed, containing a power to dispose of it to the nearest of kin at his death, as he was not then married.

After six weeks' confinement at Leicester, we received with joy a favourable account, and at the end of seven weeks he was liberated, when he visited his brother at Arnsby. I went there to see him. He was from home when I arrived, but his brother informed me that he would drink tea that afternoon with the Rev. Mr. Davies, at Wigstone. When I reached there, he had not arrived, but was expected from Enderby. Being too impatient to wait, I rode to meet him. I shall never forget that meeting. I observed him on horseback in a large enclosure, with another gentleman. He had no expectation of seeing me. As soon as I approached he recognised me, and pulled off his glove to shake hands, quite overjoyed. He had all the appearance of a man just come out of the Inquisition. He looked pale and emaciated. His eye had lost its brilliancy, his spirits were broken by severity and harshness. I flattered myself his first feeling was, "Now I have found a young man who will lay down his life for me." We rode to Wigstone, where we spent the evening. He inquired after all his Cambridge friends, upon which subject I satisfied him, but was fearful of alluding in the slightest degree to his late unfortunate situation. He, however, soon broke the silence, and to my surprise, with

a heart full of injuries, discovered to me all the "secrets of his prison-house," with his feelings and usage at the time. When we parted I promised to see him again in a week or ten days: he rode with me as far as Leicester.

At the appointed period I paid him a second visit, and found him with his brother at Arnsby. His health and spirits were greatly improved. His usual vivacity had returned. He again entered into a detail of his sufferings during his confinement, in the presence of his brother and sister, who were also very loud in their complaints. His brother said that he had frequently called, but was not suffered to see him. Mr. Hall enumerated some of the evils of his situation in the following manner: "Sir, they took away my watch, and confined me in a place which overlooked the ward in which were a number of pauper lunatics, practising all manner of ludicrous antics. Sir, this sight was enough to make me ten times worse; they were as mad as March hares. I was at times quite insensible. I don't believe Dr. Arnold was aware how I was treated by a lazy keeper. Do you know, sir, to save himself a little time and trouble (being winter), the fellow came at five o'clock and fastened me down upon my bed, where I could not stir either hand or foot, till about eight o'clock the next morning. During this time I had many lucid intervals; he had no business to leave me, sir, so long, but it was to enable him to go away sooner. You cannot conceive the horror of my situation when I found myself perfectly sensible. Now, sir, I hope and entreat, if ever I am taken ill again, you will use all your influence to prevent my being sent there a second time. It is a very mistaken notion that severity is requisite. *Mild treatment, with proper restraint and kindness*, is all that is necessary in such cases. There is nothing so beneficial as private confinement, with proper medical attendance, to prevent abuses by unfeeling keepers." Then, with great energy, he repeated the request, "I must beg, sir, you will do all in your power to prevent such treatment in case of a relapse." His brother and sister were equally urgent. After this, we walked out in the village in which he was born, and where his father had preached. He pointed out the places where he had played at this game and the other when a boy. Then he took me into the meeting-house, which had been recently rebuilt, and expatiated on the architecture. "Only look, sir, at that fretwork on those windows. What do these villagers know about fretwork? places should be suitable to the habits of the worshippers. I like to see them neat and simple. Why, sir, one of the deacons is a very pious man, but he goes to work at a shilling a day; my brother frequently employs him. Why, sir, what does he know about fretwork? Then, sir, they had a minister, Mr. ——, who used to quote long passages of Greek in the pulpit. Only think, sir; what could these people know about Greek? how absurd, sir!"

The whole strain of his conversation was so natural, that I was quite satisfied as to his recovery. When about to leave him, he said, "I will go with you a little way, and point out the best road across the country to Market Harborough." After laying down the cross-

roads very correctly, he continued, "Now I will tell you a profound secret: I mean, sir, to return to Cambridge, but I have no idea that I shall be able to remain there; you know my feelings and objections to the place, but I feel myself bound in duty and gratitude to return, and to make the trial, but do not mention a word of this to anybody." I promised to observe secrecy, and to comply with his request relative to his treatment in case of a relapse.

The month of April was fixed for his return to Cambridge, and the late Rev. T. N. Toller, of Kettering, as an old friend, was invited to accompany him, and to preach one part of the day, in order that Mr. Hall might resume his situation by degrees. He came to the house of Mr. W. Hollick, the senior deacon. We were all delighted to see him again in his own pulpit. The following morning I called on him, and found him somewhat dejected. I commenced the conversation by saying, "We were greatly delighted to see you once more in your pulpit, sir. It was a serious and admirable discourse. I quite enjoyed it." "Oh, do not say anything about it, sir; I shall never be the preacher I was. I find I have lost the principal faculty that distinguished my preaching, which was imagination; you know that was my forte, sir; all my imagination has been overstretched. You, with the rest of my friends, tell me that I was only seven weeks in confinement, and the date of the year corresponds, so that I am bound to believe you, but they have appeared to me like seven years. My mind was so excited, and my imagination so lively and active, that more ideas passed through my mind during those seven weeks than in any seven years of my life. Whatever I had obtained from reading or reflection was present to me; I had all my ideas at my fingers' ends, and could bring them to bear upon any subject."

I endeavoured to console him, and had the satisfaction to leave him in better spirits. He was very much occupied, during Mr. Toller's stay, in visiting his friends. As he could not bring his mind to settle in Cambridge or at Shelford, he took a house at Foulmire, nine miles from Cambridge: we therefore saw very little of him. He was, however, very punctual in coming over on the Sabbath, and generally remained all night, and the same on the lecture evening. The peculiar doctrines of the Gospel became more prominent in his discourses, which were more argumentative, but less brilliant and imaginative, than before his illness.

In the month of November following, which was about seven months after Mr. Hall's first confinement, he was suddenly visited again with his awful malady. There were not the previous indications as in his former illness.

On the Sabbath, which was our sacrament day, he absented himself from the morning service. One of the members prayed, and Mr. W. Hollick, the deacon, read a sermon. After service, inquiries were made, a consultation was held, but nothing could be ascertained; we had but little doubt, however, from his previous punctuality, that he was ill at Foulmire.

Our fears were, unhappily, realized. He entered the meeting in the

afternoon about ten minutes after the time. As he walked up the aisle, he turned to look at the clock. I knew, by the wildness of his appearance, that it was all over. He went into the vestry; from thence, with a hurried step, into the pulpit. He gave out the hymn, read the Scriptures, and prayed very coherently, but in a strange and hurried manner. He then gave out the second hymn, and selected for his text Heb., xii., 2: *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

He appeared tolerably collected till he commenced the second part of the subject—the particular seasons in which it was peculiarly necessary to look unto Jesus. The first was in the period of temptation, under satanic influence: "For that there is a devil," said he, "who, *as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour*, is as true from the Word of God as that there is a God. I say there is a devil, and there are many devils." Then he became quite incoherent. The effect on his audience cannot be described; we looked one to another with surprise, not knowing what to do. As a junior, I looked to the senior deacons, expecting that one of them would go to the pulpit and request him to come down; but the general feeling was—let him alone. In a few minutes he recovered himself, raised his hand to his forehead, stopped, and said, "My friends, I beg pardon, my head is very bad this afternoon;" dropped the subject of temptation, went on with the other division of his subject connectedly, and closed; gave out the third hymn, and concluded with prayer and the benediction.

The place was crowded; there were more young noblemen, fellow-commoners, and undergraduates, who witnessed the scene, than I ever remember to have seen before or since. He immediately came down, and went into the vestry; no one went to him, not knowing what to do, as it was ordinance day. The congregation had dispersed; the members of the church waited in silent suspense. He ordered the cloth to be laid, and the elements to be brought out as usual; then entered the table-seat more composed, and administered the sacrament to us in a solemn and collected manner, pronounced the benediction, and dismissed us. Just as we were leaving our seats he called out vehemently, "Stop! stop! my friends; I have something very important to communicate to you. I have to inform you that the Millennium is come; that period which we have been waiting for, hoping for, and praying for so long, is at length come; let us all kneel down and bless God that we have lived to see this day." He then offered up a prayer in a strain of the wildest sublimity.

On his return from the meeting, he saw in the gateway of the Castle Inn one of his old members, named Thurlbone. "Ah, Master Thurlbone, how do you do? Be faithful unto death, be faithful unto death, and you shall have a crown of life." This, the good old man (who did not live to see Mr. Hall again) said, was as a voice continually sounding in his ears. When Mr. Hall recovered, I mentioned the circumstance to him, but I found that he did not recollect it.

Mr. Hall then went to the residence of Mr. T. Nutter, but was very

restless and uneasy the whole of the evening. He walked about the bedroom during the greater part of the night, took his horse early in the morning, and rode to his own house at Foulmire. Two of his Cambridge friends followed him, for the purpose of quieting his mind. When he perceived them, he went to his bureau and furnished himself with money to the amount of seventy pounds, then ran into the stable and saddled his horse, and without waiting to receive them, galloped across the fields to an inn at Royston. His friends followed him, but could not prevail on him to remain there. He would go to London, mounted his horse, and rode to Waltham Cross, twelve miles from that city. He was taken back the following day to his house at Foulmire, where his own plan of private confinement was tried, but it did not succeed. I went over for the purpose of seeing him, but he would not allow any person to be admitted. I, however, caught a view of him through the parlour window; he was pacing the room, and evidently saw me, but appeared like a man walking and talking in his sleep; his looks were wild and his eyes dim. A consultation was held after a lapse of two or three weeks, to consider the propriety of sending him back to Leicester. I then related the particular instructions he had previously given me in case of a relapse: his senior friends, however, resolved to send him to Leicester, and assigned as a reason the fact that persons afflicted with such disorders invariably complain of harsh treatment.

On the following day, Mr. Hall's brother, from Arnsby, came to my house. He was sadly distressed, and wept bitterly. He was aware of Mr. Hall's aversion to Leicester, and requested me to correspond, in his name, with Mr. James, of Bristol, upon the subject. I did so, and the result was, that Mr. Hall was conveyed to the institution at the Fish Ponds, then conducted by Dr. Cox.

His brother, in the mean time, went to Foulmire, for the purpose of seeing him, and met with a similar reception to myself. He was only permitted to see Mr. Hall through the window, and then returned to me in a distressed state of mind. They never met again; this only brother died of an apoplectic fit shortly afterward. After Mr. Hall's recovery, this circumstance affected him much. He told me that he remembered seeing his brother through the window, and requested me to relate every circumstance, and the particulars of the difficulties which I had to encounter in preventing him from being sent to Leicester, expressing, at the same time, his obligations in the kindest manner. This circumstance may in some measure account for the large share in his affections which I afterward enjoyed. He has since frequently conversed with me on the painful subject of his illness, and courted rather than avoided the conversation when we were alone.

In a few months he recovered, owing to the mild and kind treatment practised by Dr. Cox at the Fish Ponds, and expatiated, in the warmest terms, on the superior management of that institution;* as a proof

* This excellent establishment is now conducted by the Drs. Bompass, father and son, who have devoted their whole studies to mental maladies, and who sustain a very high reputation. Dr. B. senior is a gentleman of whose skill Mr. Hall entertained a very high opinion, and whose friendship he much valued.—B.

of which he never had a relapse. Dr. Cox gave him some directions calculated to prevent a return of the complaint. The three principal things were, first, that he must leave Cambridge entirely; secondly, that he must practise smoking, as a composing habit; thirdly, that he must enter the marriage state, in order to relieve the solitude of single life. He therefore sent in his resignation of the pastoral office.

After leaving the Fish Ponds, Mr. Hall went to the house of a relation who resided at Enderby, a village near Leicester. He preached occasionally in the neighbourhood previously to his accepting the pastoral office at Harvey Lane Meeting-house. About this time he married the present Mrs. Hall, whom he first met at the house of the Rev. T. C. Edmonds, then pastor of the church at Clipstone. The particulars attending these events I leave to his biographer, as they did not come immediately under my notice. I think that more than two years elapsed before I saw him again. He had been engaged to preach at Dunstable, in Bedfordshire, which I visited for the purpose of meeting him. His text on the Sabbath morning was the 12th of John, 26th verse: in the afternoon he expounded the fourth Psalm. We spent the evening alone, at his request, as he was anxious to receive a particular account of his friends at Cambridge: there was scarcely an individual about whom he did not appear interested. A considerable time having elapsed since his last visit to Cambridge, my object was to persuade him to go there, which he promised to do as soon as he could summon sufficient resolution. I breakfasted with him the following morning. On my rising to leave, he would not suffer me to go, but earnestly requested that I would spend more time with him, and drive him in my gig to Arnsby, where he was engaged to preach on Tuesday. It was too great a temptation for me to resist, and I consented. He was then a confirmed smoker, and had his pipe put into the gig for the purpose of lighting it at the first turnpike. We left Dunstable about twelve o'clock, and renewed our conversation upon the state of the congregation at Cambridge. Mr. Hall was succeeded in the pastoral office by Mr., now Dr. Cox, for whom he entertained the highest regard. "Sir, I often have the scene before me: I could always tell when the people were pleased with my preaching." He then personally alluded to a few who were remarkable in their manner of hearing. "There is Mr. ——; I could always tell when he was pleased: did you ever observe, sir? he would bend his head forward, accompanied with a nod of approbation and a smile of satisfaction. And there was Mr. ——; he used to raise himself, and elevate his neck and chin, as if he would not lose a word. And there was old Mr. ——, who sat to the right; he was a very pious man, sir; I always knew when I said any thing savoury; he would immediately stand up, and move his mouth and his lips (describing the motion) as if he were chewing the cud, and the words were sweet in his mouth. Oh, sir, I could always tell when my people were pleased, and when the subject told, from their manner of hearing." He then delineated their characters, dispositions, and circumstances, and made particular inquiry respecting the prosperity of the church,

the class of subjects selected by the minister, his style of preaching, &c., and concluded with a warm panegyric: "They were an amiable people: I often think of them, sir; they have been very kind to me; I was sorry to be obliged to leave them."

The road where we travelled was new to me, but familiar to him. "Sir," said he, "this is the great Holyhead road." His knowledge of the country was very accurate, and he took great delight in explaining the different directions of the roads. "Sir, I will tell you a good plan, which you may adopt when you are travelling. I always imagine myself an insect upon a map, looking one way and then another, as if it were inquiring the way, before it crawled along: by this method I have found, at the end of my journey, that I had a complete map in my mind, with the relative situation of all the principal towns and gentlemen's seats; and you will find the plan very amusing, especially when you are travelling by a stage-coach, and have not interesting company."

Speaking of * * *, a work of considerable celebrity, on his admiring the richness of the thoughts, I said, the sentences are so involved, and the periods so long, that after reading them over repeatedly, I could not understand them. I instanced a gentleman who, though possessed of considerable powers of mind, experienced the same difficulty. "I never have that difficulty with either your sermons or with your printed compositions." He replied, "I can tell you the reason of that, sir: I am so uncommonly stupid, that, unless I see a subject from beginning to end as plain as a pike-staff, I cannot explain it to others. Sir, some people think I know a great deal, but I am very ignorant; I see that much more is to be learned in every department of knowledge; new prospects continually open upon me, and exhibit a boundless field for inquiry."

We came to a town where we dined. He said, "Now, sir, if you please, I should like to call on Mr. ——, a dissenting minister, after dinner, and have a pipe.* He is a very eccentric old gentleman; but if he should hear that I have passed through without calling to see him, he will be very much hurt, and think I have slighted him. Old people are very sensitive on that point, sir." I said, "Sir, the only objection is, that we shall not be able to reach Northampton to-night, unless you determine not to remain with him long." He promised that he would not; but, knowing his habits, I was afraid of being detained. However, we called, and found the old gentleman at home. He did not at first recollect Mr. Hall's person. Mr. Hall broke the silence by saying, "Mr. Greene, of Cambridge, sir." Immediately I added, "Mr. Hall, of Leicester, formerly of Cambridge, sir." "What! do I see Mr. Hall?" said the old gentleman. Then, calling the servant, "Tell my son Mr. Hall is here." "No," said Mr. Hall, "we can't stay; we must go on to Northampton to-night: I can only just take a pipe with you." "You must not take a pipe

* The reference here is, no doubt, to the venerable and excellent Mr. Bull, of Newport Pagnell, the first tutor of the college there, and the friend of Cowper, Newton, and Thornton. He was an eccentric, but excellent man, possessing great genius, and manifesting ardent and disinterested piety. Christian justice is greatly in arrears to his memory.—B.

till you have had some refreshment; come, walk into my library while tea is being prepared." He certainly had a very fine collection of theological works. "Well," said Mr. Hall, in a playful mood, to the old gentleman, "who is your favourite author among the English divines?" "Oh, Dr. Owen," said the old gentleman; "I think he is the best writer in the English language." "I can't think how you can like Dr. Owen," said Mr. Hall; "I can't read him with any patience; I never read a page of Dr. Owen, sir, without finding some confusion in his thoughts, either a truism or a contradiction in terms." "How can you say so, Mr. Hall? I read Dr. Owen the last thing at night, and the first in the morning, and put him under my pillow." This roused Mr. Hall. "I do not care for that, sir: where is the volume, sir? I will make good my assertion." It was brought, and given to him. "Now, sir, what part did you read last?" The page being pointed out, he quickly discovered a sentence, and read it. "Now, sir," said he, "what do you think of that? Is not that a truism?" "Why, yes, I believe it is," said the old gentleman. Then fixing on another passage, which he read, "Is not that a contradiction in terms, sir?" "I believe it is," was the reply. "Well, then, I have made good my assertion. Now, sir, what do you think of your favourite Dr. Owen? Who is the first writer in the English language now, sir?" "Oh," said the old gentleman, "*Mr. Hall, of Leicester.*" This compliment abashed Mr. Hall, and he hurried the tea. As soon as we had done, Mr. Hall became impatient for the promised pipe. There being some delay in bringing it, the old gentleman called for it a second time, querulously. "Sarah, why don't you bring the pipe? Everybody *forgets me, now!*" Then rising and addressing Mr. Hall, he said, "Let us return thanks;" and in the first sentence, with the same breath, he said, "O Lord, we thank thee *that thou art an exception!*" I looked at Mr. Hall, who had risen from his chair, and appeared perfectly astonished. After this he finished his pipe, and then we hastened to the inn. The moment we had left the house, Mr. Hall said, "Only think, sir, of the old gentleman making such a joke in prayer. He is a truly pious man, sir, but has many singularities." He proceeded to relate some anecdotes respecting him, which, with the above adventure, and Mr. Hall's opinions of Dr. Owen's writings, against which it is well known he had a great prejudice,* were the subjects of conversation till we reached Northampton.

* The following particulars of a similar conversation may not be uninteresting to the reader. They have been kindly communicated to the editor by the Rev. J. H. Cox, now of Uley, in Gloucestershire, author of "Jesus showing Mercy," and other excellent works. After mentioning several other circumstances, Mr. C. observes, "I had also the pleasure of spending the evening with Mr. Hall at St. Alban's. He was smoking by the fireside, lost in thought. 'Yes' and 'No' were all that could be drawn from him. The master of the house beckoned to me to retire. I perfectly understood him, and presently he joined me. 'Sir,' said he, 'what is to be done? we cannot get a word from Mr. Hall.' 'Change chairs with me, sir,' I replied, 'and, if I am not mistaken, you will not be long suffering disappointment.' On our return to the room, I took a seat near Mr. Hall, and, after a short pause, in a subdued tone of voice, but sufficiently loud to be heard by the company, I addressed him by inquiring which he considered to be the best writer, John Howe or Dr. Owen. 'Sir, sir,' he replied, 'you are a man of sense, and can judge for yourself. Sir,' he added, 'Bogue and Bennett tell us that, rather than students should not purchase Howe's works, they should sell their shirts; and such is the superiority of Owen, that, if destitute of other means for procuring his writings, they should sell the bed from under them.' I said, 'Sir, I prefer both the style and di-

After our arrival, a lay preacher called upon him, and asked him what he considered was the lowest measure of saving grace which was necessary for a Christian to possess before he entered heaven. Mr. Hall, being fatigued, was not disposed for conversation; and thinking the good man had more zeal than knowledge, simply replied, it was a question to which he did not know how to reply. "A Christian should endeavour to obtain the largest measures of grace. *Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity,* &c., &c., *that so an abundant entrance may be administered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

When we parted for the night, Mr. Hall said, "Now, sir, mind, we must be up early in the morning—we must start at six o'clock; I hope you will be punctual." "Oh, sir," I replied, "you may depend upon me, but I have my doubts about you. I shall call for you precisely at six." "I hope you will, sir; you know I have to preach to-morrow, and I shall be sure to be up, for we must be at Arnsby by half past ten." However, when I called the next morning at six, he was in bed and fast asleep. I waited for him half an hour. As soon as he was ready, he apologized for oversleeping himself. When he got into the gig with his pipe, he said, "Now, sir, as you were never in Northampton before, I must show you the Market Hill; it is not far out of the way, and is a fine place." I expressed some little disappointment, and said, though larger, I did not think it was equal to the market-place at Cambridge. He inquired my reasons for thinking so. I replied, there was no uniformity in the shops; there were some very large houses, and some very small ones; and it had not the business appearance of Cambridge. However, he persisted in his opinion; and, seeing that it was useless to oppose him, I dropped the subject.

We breakfasted at Welford. Soon after we started, I regretted that we had lost so much time, and was for pushing on. He said, "Oh, never mind, sir; mine is the second part of the service, and they will

vinity of Howe to Dr. Owen.' 'I am glad of it, sir,' replied Mr. Hall; 'it shows your good sense. Determined to fan the fire that was kindling, I ventured to ask another question by saying, that it became me to be diffident of my own judgment; and, therefore, if he would be so good as to give me his opinion of Dr. Owen, I should be much obliged. His reply was, 'Sir, he is a double-Dutchman, floundering in a continent of mud.' As might be expected, we were all alive. Considering this to be rather too sweeping a censure, I said, 'But, sir, you will allow that some, at least, of the doctor's practical works are excellent.' Mr. Hall was inexorable, and the conversation on this subject terminated by his saying, 'Yes, sir, to those who have sense enough to understand them.' The subject of the restoration of fallen intelligences was then introduced, and, with the exception of an occasional short pause, he riveted our attention till the abbey clock struck twelve. I wished from my heart that it had been silenced; but we must wait for uninterrupted activity of mind till we enjoy, as Howe observes, 'the rest and repose of the soul amid infinite delights.'"—GREENE.

Perhaps I may be forgiven if I add another illustration of Mr. Hall's prejudice against Dr. Owen, which arose, I am persuaded, entirely from the peculiarity of the doctor's style. A lady whom I knew, of considerable talent and wit, and who somewhat delighted to tease persons with whom she came in contact, determined to enjoy herself with putting Mr. Hall in a fume about Dr. Owen. "Don't you think, Mr. Hall," she asked, "that Dr. Owen was a very great man?" "In what, madam?" "Why, as a profound divine?" "No, madam, I don't think so at all. I don't recollect a single remarkable thing he ever wrote." "Well, sir, you differ from almost every one else; his reputation for sound learning, solid judgment, and ardent piety seems very general." "Well, madam, you may be quite right; I dare say you are so; but the fact is, that I have sometimes placed myself under his guidance, and he has conducted me to a continent of mud, where I have been almost suffocated. I dare say, madam, he is quite sound at the bottom, but it is too deep—by far too deep for me to reach it."—B.

not be surprised if I am not in time. I have no character for punctuality, therefore I have nothing to lose: the only astonishment would be to see me in time. But now, sir, if you please, we will not talk any more; I hope you will excuse it; I must prepare my sermon. As we have been together ever since Sunday afternoon, I have had no time to think what I am to preach about." He then laid himself back in the gig, and I expected we were not to have another word till we reached Arnsby; but in less than ten minutes he rose up, and said, "Oh, Mr. Greene, what do you think of that controversy between Dr. Gregory, the Edinburgh reviewers, and Professor Playfair?" I told him what I had read of it, and the particulars which I had received from Dr. Gregory. He continued the conversation till we were in sight of Arnsby.

On observing a crowd of people in a close, Mr. Hall said, "I believe they are holding the service in the open air; if so, I am determined I won't preach in that situation. It is much better to preach in the meeting, sir; and if all cannot be accommodated, part of them had better remain outside, especially as it is a fine day." On our arrival, we found that the service had commenced nearly half an hour. While I was attending to the horse, the Rev. Andrew Fuller came to me, and inquired from whence I brought Mr. Hall; I told him from Dunstable. He asked me where he was gone. I said I did not know—I lost him in a minute. "Pray, Mr. Fuller, what part do you take to-day in the service?" "Oh, I have no particular part. Mr. —— takes the principal part of the service here to-day." He then went in pursuit of Mr. Hall. In a few minutes I followed; and, after some inquiries, found Mr. Hall in a private room, with a pipe, his Bible, and some tea before him. I said, "Mr. Fuller has been looking for you, sir: have you seen him?" "No, I have not: what part of the service does he take to-day?" "Oh, sir, he says he has no particular part assigned him; Mr. —— takes the lead to-day." "Why, sir, this is extraordinary: you must know, sir, that Mr. Fuller is always at the head of these associations. What did he say? How did he look? Did not Andrew appear *cut?* Well, it is the first time Mr. —— was the principal figure in a piece: but every one has his day. His time is short, and I hope he will make the best of it." I mentioned to Mr. Fuller Mr. Hall's determination not to preach in the open air. As it was a double service, they adjourned till the afternoon, when Mr. Hall preached, in the meeting-house, a very striking sermon, from the second chapter of the Revelation, and the first verse: *Unto the angel of the church at Ephesus, write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*

I took no notes of the sermon at the time, but, as far as my memory serves, Mr. Hall pursued the following ideas: That Jesus Christ was the Author and Source of all moral and spiritual light. When he came into the world, he said, *I am the light of life, I am the light of the world; he that believeth in me shall not walk in darkness.* He came to dissipate the darkness of the earth, and the gross darkness

which covered the people. The means he employed to imbody and diffuse this light were by constituting Christian churches in different parts of the world. Believers derive a portion of light, and heat, and influence from him; and he exhorts them to *let their light so shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father which is in heaven.* This made the light beneficial to a certain degree; but he ordained that these scattered rays of light should be collected in different places as beacons, to preserve and exhibit a greater body of light: hence the seven churches of Asia are called the *seven golden candlesticks*, as exhibiting the light of Christianity in great splendour and effulgence. The design of Jesus Christ has been to multiply these lights by increasing the number of churches in different parts of the world, until the whole earth is filled with his glory. *Who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand;* denoting his protection and guidance to preserve their light pure, and to keep them from wandering. They are not to be wandering stars, but regular in their movements, and fixed in his hand: therefore, *he holdeth them in his right hand. Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.* He *walketh*—representing the ease, the familiarity, and the delight he takes in beholding the order and regularity of the works of his own right hand planting; and also his communion with them, as it is said, Genesis, iii., 8, our first parents *heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.* He closed by a powerful application of the subject to the ministers present, who are termed angels, or stars of the churches; and also to their different members, whom he exhorted to preserve the purity of their light, lest, after the example of some of the seven churches, they should be rebuked, and have their candlestick taken out of its place.

After service I parted with him, and drove to Market Harborough, delighted, beyond measure, with his conversation.

Having spent three days with Mr. Hall, it was a relief to be alone. No person who has not been much with him can have any conception of the effects produced by his uncommon weight of intellect, if I may be allowed the expression, pressing upon the mind. It was a continual flow of conversation on a variety of subjects for hours in succession, when he either expected his friend to converse or listen attentively; and occasionally questioning him, as he proceeded, that he might know whether he was understood, and if his friend assented or dissented, or wished for farther information. Thus he kept the mind on the run, as it were, till it became fatigued, from which nothing but retirement and solitude could recover it. Many persons, much my superiors, have admitted that this has frequently been the case with themselves; and that they have, on such occasions, experienced so much lassitude and headache, that it was impossible to give much account of his intellectual conversation. I have heard Mrs. Hall say, that her head has frequently been in such a state, that she has been obliged to cease attention to recover herself, when he has been drawn out in conversation upon an interesting subject.

I think it was the following autumn, in returning from Leamington,

I went to Leicester, on a Saturday, to spend a Sabbath with him. When I arrived, I found that he was engaged to preach the next day at Sutton in the Elms, a village a few miles from Leicester. He supped with me at the inn. Early the next morning I went to Sutton, and heard him preach from James, iv., 13–15: *Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas, ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.* The sermon was upon the folly of presuming on the future, from our absolute ignorance of the events of life; and the piety and necessity of referring all our actions and plans to the Divine will: *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.* "The presumption of asserting that *we will go*, appears," said Mr. Hall, "from the consideration that we may not be *able* to go: we may be prevented by death, by sickness, or other calamities of a providential nature; and if we did go *into such a city*, we might not *live there a year to buy and sell;* and if we did live to buy and sell, we could not be sure of *getting gain;* for riches are not always the lot of men of understanding and enterprise. A pious mind, on the contrary, will refer every thing to the Divine disposal, and say, *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.*"

After dining with me at the house of a mutual friend, he retired to his chamber to prepare for the afternoon's discourse, which was founded on *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death.* The characters of the righteous and the wicked were so beautifully and correctly delineated, that I cannot do justice by giving a slight sketch of the sermon. After this service a number of friends assembled to drink tea with him, but Mr. Hall was missing. I found him praying in a retired part of the garden. *He was alone, and in an agony.* Unconscious of my approach, with the deepest expressions of humility and self-abasement, he mourned over the imperfections of his best services, and prayed that, through the blood of sprinkling, the *iniquity of his holy things* might be forgiven. Like Jacob of old, he *wrestled with God;* he prayed *with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save; and was heard in that he feared.* I was deeply affected, and returned to the house to inform the company. I think he was engaged more than half an hour in these devotions. From the loudness of his voice, I began to be apprehensive of a return of his malady. At length I called to him, and said that I wished to take my leave of him, being under the necessity of going a stage towards Cambridge that evening. I observed that he had been in tears, but was then quite calm and composed. He had forgotten that I was to leave him at Sutton that night.

Some time after this interview I received the following note:

"My dear Sir,

"This is simply to inform you I *shall* be at home (God willing) next Lord's Day, and it is our ordinance day. It will give Mrs. Hall and

myself unfeigned pleasure to see you. With kind respects to Mrs. Greene, in which Mrs. H. would, I am sure, affectionately join me, were she within, I remain, dear sir,

"Yours affectionately,

"R. HALL.

"Tuesday, January, 1811.

"Remember, this is *Tuesday*. The almanac I cannot just now find, and am afraid of being too late for the post."

On the following Saturday I went to Leicester, and found him in good health and spirits. I think it was during this visit that he preached from Colossians, i., 12: *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* The subject which occupied both morning and afternoon was, "The necessity of a meetness and preparation for heaven, and thanksgiving wherever it was experienced." He announced his intention to preach a third sermon the following Sabbath, to complete the subject. I have copious notes of the *two* sermons, which were remarkably striking and impressive.* He administered the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in the morning to his Pædobaptist friends, and in the afternoon to the members of the *strict* Baptist church.

I remained with Mr. Hall till the following Wednesday. He pressed me very much to stay over the Sabbath, as he wished me to hear the completion of the subject; adding, "I shall, in the afternoon, prove that, as heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, so hell is a prepared place for the wicked; and have selected these words for my text, *Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.*" I much regretted that circumstances prevented me from complying with this request, and gratifying my own inclination.

To those who never witnessed the celebration of the Lord's Supper among Dissenters, the following account may not be uninteresting. Mr. Hall's manner of conducting this solemn service was as peculiar, affectionate, and heavenly as his preaching. When the table was covered with the cloth, and the elements were placed upon it, Mr. Hall rose (the deacons sitting on either side of him), and commenced by reading the authority for this commemoration, from the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, 11th chapter, 23d and following verses: *I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread,* &c.

After offering up a devout prayer for the presence and blessing of the Master of the feast, he proceeded to break the bread, and solemnly to address the communicants. The subjects of these addresses were the nature and design of the Lord's Supper; the New Testament, or Covenant, ratified and sealed by the blood and death of the Saviour; the affecting views thereby represented to us—the Lamb of God slain, the evil of sin, the great love of Jesus Christ in dying for us *while we were yet enemies;* the privileges secured to us in the remission of sins, by faith in him, connected with the duty of self-examination—adop-

* These notes are printed in this volume.—B.

tion into his family—spiritual peace and joy—supplies of grace to all believers—the earnest of eternal life in the gift of the Spirit, and the hopes of glory, honour, and immortality.

These and other topics he dwelt upon in a manner infinitely varied, and with earnestness seldom equalled. It is impossible to forget his tears of penitence, gratitude, and love, when speaking of the astonishing condescension of God in admitting such creatures and rebels into communion with him, and investing them with the privileges and dignities of the sons of God.

After breaking the bread, and saying, *Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me*, he first partook of it himself, then gave the plates to the deacons, who handed them round to the communicants. A pause ensued, which was broken by a continuation of his discourse, or, rather, an audible meditation on the scenes of Calvary, which he portrayed in such lively colours as to bring, as it were, the crucified Saviour immediately before us.

When all had received the bread, he again rose and repeated the words, *After the same manner also he took the cup*, &c., adding, "Let *us* give thanks." After the second prayer he poured out the wine, and said, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*

Having partook of the wine, he gave the cups to the deacons, paused a few minutes, and resumed his discourse; sitting as before, and frequently pursuing the idea *that without shedding of blood there is no remission.*

Occasionally he introduced the leading thoughts of his previous sermon, which invariably had a sacramental bearing: or, if there had been any providential dispensation, such as an affliction or bereavement in the family of any of his members, he sympathized with them, and consoled their minds with the near prospect of eternity, when the days of mourning would be ended, and they be forever with the Lord: *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

Then rising, he said, "After supper, we are informed they sang a hymn. Let us sing the — hymn in the third book of Dr. Watts." (He generally fixed on those sacramental hymns.) The following was a favourite:

> "How are thy glories here display'd,
> Great God, how bright they shine,
> While at thy word we break the bread,
> And pour the flowing wine!" &c.

When the hymn had been sung, he pronounced the benediction with great solemnity, and added, "Pray remember the poor:" a collection was then made, as is usual in all our churches.

Mr. Hall entertained a singular opinion as to the propriety of permitting spectators to be present during the administration of the Lord's Supper. He never practically enforced his views, but invariably maintained the opinion. He said that, "in primitive times, there was no such custom." In all other societies, none but members attended their private meetings; nor were spectators to this ordinance admit-

ted in the Church of England. He considered that a minister would necessarily feel disturbed in his meditations, and restrained in his addresses, by the presence of spectators, who frequently remained from mere curiosity. It was his opinion that, as a pastor of a church necessarily observes many things among the members which render reproof and counsel, in such seasons, both requisite and proper, the presence of strangers was by no means desirable.

He was perfectly aware of the objection to this argument, viz., that some persons have dated their serious impressions from attending as spectators. To this he replied, "That may be true; but we must take into consideration the unpleasantness occasioned to many members by having their devotions interrupted, by the consciousness of becoming subjects for criticism and frivolous remark for mere 'outer-court worshippers.' In such seasons, the most solemn on this side of the grave, *a stranger ought not to intermeddle.*"

The summer after my journey with him to Arnsby, Mr. Hall went to London, and suddenly determined to visit Cambridge. Without any previous intimation, he surprised us by coming on Saturday afternoon, by the coach, to the house of Mr. Hollick. When he knocked at the door, covered with dust, the old servant, as soon as he recognised Mr. Hall, started back, and appeared much frightened. Mr. Hollick was equally surprised at his appearance, and almost speechless. Mr. Hall broke the silence by saying, "Do not be alarmed, sir; I hope you are not ashamed of me. I have better clothes than these, sir; but the roads were so dusty that I would not travel in my best. I got inside of the coach at Trumpington, sir, as I did not like to be seen; I pulled my hat over my face, that no person might recognise me. I mean to preach to-morrow, sir; but I shall stay only a day or two." The news of Mr. Hall's arrival spread rapidly, and was soon generally known through the town: every one appeared as much delighted as if he had been raised from the dead. We hailed the dawn of the Sabbath, as in days past, when we enjoyed an intellectual and religious feast. He remained with us till the Wednesday. Mr. Hollick kept open house the whole of the time, and the evening before Mr. Hall's departure we filled it.

Before leaving us, Mr. Hall promised to bring Mrs. Hall the following year, to spend two or three Sabbaths, and that his future visits should be periodical. His parting prayer was truly affecting. One of the reasons that had prevented him from visiting Cambridge was, the unsettled state of the congregation. For a long time his loss appeared so great, and the attachment of the people towards him so strong, that many could not bring themselves to like any other minister: and such was the noble character of Mr. Hall's mind, and the delicacy of his feeling, that he was fearful of reviving latent partialities, until he found the people fairly settled and united in another pastor. This I know was the case, from previous conversation with him. It cannot be surprising that, after exhibiting the highest possible degree of intellectual greatness, during a residence of fourteen years at Cambridge, where he was universally beloved, a people ac-

customed to his own ministration should be indifferent to other preachers. It must be acknowledged that this was the case for many years. The Rev. T. C. Edmonds had then been settled among us but a short time, and such were his amiable feelings, that he was not the least surprised at this almost spiritual idolatry.

The following autumn, Mr. Hall brought Mrs. Hall to Cambridge. It was a kind of jubilee to all his friends. Many persons went from London and other parts to hear him; and a number of distinguished persons of the University also attended; indeed, more than the place could possibly contain. We were obliged to go nearly an hour before the time of service to secure our seats. With the exception of the evening lecture, the remainder of each week was spent in visiting his friends. He remarked jocosely, shortly after he arrived, "I don't know what I shall preach about, sir; I have brought no sermon with me, not even a scrap of writing, sir; you may search all my pockets and portmanteau, if you like." Every sermon was delivered without the use of notes, and was arranged in his mind by an hour or two's previous retirement. These visits were repeated about every two years.

Such was Mr. Hall's desire to see all his old friends, that, before he left Cambridge, one morning was set apart for the purpose of meeting those members of the church who were in the lower class of society. A public breakfast was provided at a friend's house, in order that each of them might go and talk to him in their own way. He would then enter into all the minute particulars relative to their families, relations, deaths, marriages, &c.; and such was his astonishing memory, that he could go over the history of their lives for the space of many years; and this he did with so much interest, affability, and condescension, as made him the idol not only of the rich, but of the poor. This meeting, which delighted him as much as any of his other visits, always concluded with singing and prayer. During his periodical returns to Cambridge, Mr. Hall breakfasted with one party, dined with another, and supped with a third; and, to use his own words, it was as much as he could do to manage his rounds in three weeks. I pass over a number of these successive visits, being all of a similar character; but there is one circumstance which I shall notice, that, up to 1817, he used to notice the "singular identity of our Cambridge congregation," such as, he said, "could hardly be exhibited in any other place in the kingdom." There was scarcely a head of any of the principal families removed from the place by death or other circumstances for more than twenty years. The same persons continued to sit in the same places. Thus, when he thought of Cambridge (as he said), he could easily call to recollection the relative situation of every one. Since that period, how has the scene been changed! how many of us have had to mourn the loss either of a wife, or husband, or father, or mother, brother, sister, or friend, and now, alas! of *himself*.

In the spring of 1820 I received the following letter from Mr. Hall:

"April 28th, 1820.

"My dear Sir,

"I sincerely thank you for your very kind letter, and beg you will pardon my not having earlier replied to it. I have no intention of coming to Langham on the occasion to which you allude, and shall not, therefore, have the pleasure of seeing you in your new situation. I have already several indispensable engagements for the ensuing summer, which will more than occupy all the time I can spare from home; and my old indisposition is such as renders travelling peculiarly irksome to me. In addition to which, I find, with an advance of years, an increasing indisposition to locomotion, and increased attachment to home. It gives me sincere concern to hear that the health of Mrs. Greene has been exposed to such painful vicissitudes. I rejoice to find that it is improved, as well as your own, by your present situation. I wish most earnestly you had settled at Bedford, as it is a most delightful place, and would have facilitated the means of more frequent intercourse. In leaving Cambridge, with your circumstances, you have chosen the better part. Such is the state of trade, that they are not a little to be envied who are exempted from its chances and disquietudes.

"I have but little news to impart. Our town and neighbourhood is a scene of misery on account of the severe depression of our local manufacture. Such is the mass of hopeless misery everywhere presenting itself to view, that it is next to impossible for a mind of any sensibility to be cheerful. Surely never was a country, which has not experienced some public convulsion, so completely ruined as ours. Happy, my dear friend, will it be if the dismal prospects around make us sigh for a better country. Surely we see enough to wean us from the present world, and to convince us that this is not our rest. Mrs. Hall is absent for a few days in the country, or she would earnestly desire her affectionate remembrance to Mrs. Greene and yourself; she, through mercy, is tolerable, as is also my family. I have now four children—a source of much anxiety, and some pleasure. Let me beg an interest in your prayers for them and for myself. I need not say how happy we should be to see you and Mrs. Greene at Leicester: few things would afford us equal pleasure. With my affectionate regards to dear Mrs. Greene,

"I remain, dear sir, your affectionate friend,

"Robert Hall."

In the course of a few months I received the following note:

"My dear Sir,

"Being extremely hurried just at this moment, I just drop this line to inform you that I *shall* be at home on the 24th of September, when it will afford Mrs. Hall and myself a very high degree of pleasure to see you at our house. I hope this will reach you soon enough to determine you to take Leicester in your route. Mrs. H. joins in affectionate remembrance to you and Mrs. Greene.

"I am, dear sir, your affectionate friend,

"September 11th. "Robert Hall.

"P.S.—I hope you will come *immediately* to my house."

In consequence of the above invitation, Mrs. G. and myself visited Leicester. We spent a week with him in his own house, and were highly delighted, as we never found him in better health or spirits. The Sabbath was his ordinance day: his congregation, as well as his church, had considerably increased. While we remained with him, he was usually alone in his study for three or four hours every morning. He had lately suffered severely from his back, and exercise had become painful to him; this induced a habit of taking large doses of laudanum. He showed us a glass gauge which he made use of for estimating the quantity. When the pain was violent, or coming on, he took the dose in half a glass of brandy, which he said was "to sheath the laudanum."

As none of the medical men whom Mr. Hall had consulted could ascertain the cause of the intense agony which he suffered, he entertained the opinion that it was supernatural, or, like Paul's thorn in the flesh, *a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him.**

Mrs. Greene had spent a week at the house of Mr. Hall some time before this visit. He then preached from that text in the Hebrews, *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*† He dwelt much upon angels and spirits, both good and bad, and upon their mighty powers and achievements as recorded in the Scriptures. Mrs. Greene told me that while he was preaching she became alarmed, and supposed that Mr. Hall saw her countenance change; for he gave her an expressive look, as much as to say, "Be not afraid, you may trust me now; there is no danger." (He remembered that Mrs. Greene was present at Cambridge when he was taken ill while preaching upon a similar subject.) She often told me that she should never forget the expression of his countenance at the time.

His conversation was incessant upon all subjects that he considered interesting, and likely to engage our attention. He said he had been furbishing up his Italian by a renewed attention to the verbs. A lady had recently visited him who well understood the language. He was fearful, till he made the trial in conversation, that he had forgotten his knowledge of it. I asked his opinion of the celebrated Machiavel, particularly of his work entitled "The Prince." I told him I had a few months before written an essay for a periodical work, in which I took a *favourable* opinion of his character. I thought that he was a much-injured man; but I could only form my opinion from the translation of "The Prince," and his other works, and from his life in the Harleian Miscellany; but that, if I might judge from the English, "The Prince" was merely a satirical piece. His reply was, "I believe you are right, sir: I have read all his works in the Italian; and

* By the post-mortem examination of the body, it was ascertained that there were not less than ten calculi in the natural cavities of the right kidney. "These consisted of one large stone, which filled and dilated the central cavity, and nine small stones, which were firmly incased in the smaller cavities adjoining. With the exception of one, they are all armed with sharp spikes. These calculi sufficiently account for the pain endured by Mr. Hall, respecting which such varied opinions had been formed."—See *Chandler's Authentic Account of the Last Illness and Death of the Rev. R. Hall, A.M.*, published by Fuller, Bristol.—GREENE.

† See vol. iii. of this edition of his Works, p. 35–40, for Mr. Hall's notes of this sermon.—B.

his 'Prince' I have read twice in the original, and I consider it quite an imaginary, ironical, and satirical work, designed to expose the sad effects of tyranny." I observed that I had taken his view of the subject, and that, as Fenelon wrote his Telemachus as a model for good and virtuous princes, so Machiavel might have written his "Prince," to show, not only the effects of tyranny and misrule on the happiness of the people, but their certain reaction upon the tyrants themselves. As Machiavel himself subsequently said, he has "drawn them to the life in all their lineaments and colours, and I hope mankind will know them the better, so as to avoid them." I was gratified in knowing that Mr. Hall's opinion coincided with my own.

Mr. Hall related an amusing circumstance which occurred shortly after his removal to Leicester. It appeared that, as an unpleasant feeling existed between the singers and the person who officiated as clerk at Harvey Lane, they persuaded Mr. Hall to dismiss him. The man felt it so much that Mr. Hall was induced to reinstate him in his office. The first Sabbath after this, the old gentleman commenced the service by reading that Psalm by Dr. Watts which includes the lines,

"Now shall my head be lifted high
Above *my foes around*,
And songs of joy and *victory*
Within *thy temple* sound!"

Mr. Hall said that he was walking up the aisle at the time, and the effect was indescribable.

One evening our conversation turned on the subject of the war with America, previously to the acknowledgment of the independence of the United States. Mr. Hall said, "Sir, that war was very unpopular, and considered to be very unrighteous by men of true liberty principles. My father, sir, warmly advocated the American cause. When I was a little boy, he took me to the school of Mr. Ryland at Northampton, the father of Dr. Ryland, of Bristol; this Mr. Ryland was very eccentric, and a violent partisan of the Americans; it was in the hottest period of the war, sir, and many persons were very indignant at the conduct of the English government. That war, sir, was considered as a crusade against the liberty of the subject and the rights of man. The first night we arrived at Northampton from Arnsby, sir, the two old gentlemen (my father and Mr. Ryland) talked over American politics until they both became heated on the same side of the question. At length, Mr. Ryland burst forth in this manner: 'Brother Hall, I will tell you what I would do if I were General Washington.' 'Well,' said my father, 'what would you do?' 'Why, brother Hall, if I were General Washington, I would summon all the American officers: they should form a circle around me, and I would address them, and we would offer a libation in our own blood, and I would order one of them to bring a lancet and a punch-bowl; and he should bleed us all, one by one, into this punch-bowl; and I would be the first to bare my arm; and when the punch-bowl was full, and we had all been bled, I would call upon every man to consecrate himself to the work, by dipping his sword into the bowl, and entering into a solemn covenant engagement by oath, one to another,

and we would *swear by Him that sits upon the throne, and liveth for ever and ever*, that we would never sheath our swords while there was an English soldier in arms remaining in America; and that is what I would do, brother Hall.'"

Mr. Hall said to me, "Only conceive, sir, my situation; a poor little boy, that had never been out of his mother's chimney corner before, sir, sitting by these two old gentlemen, and hearing this conversation about blood. Sir, I trembled at the idea of being left with such a bloody-minded master. Why, sir, I began to think he would no more mind bleeding me, after my father was gone, than he would killing a fly. I quite expected to be bled, sir."

I observed to Mr. Hall, that this reminded me of the strong language made use of in the houses of Parliament on the iniquity and impolicy of this war, by Lord Chatham and Mr. Fox, and by Mr. Burke in his best days, when liberty glowed in his bosom. In one of his speeches he introduced the story of the "man and the wolf." He drew the parallel between the man and the British government. The ministers said they had a right to tax the Americans, as they were the liege subjects of this country: so said the man in the fable, "I have a right to shear the wolf, for God and nature gave man dominion over the beast of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea; therefore I have a right to shear the wolf." But his neighbour replied, "My good friend, have you ever calculated the hazard and the danger of the experiment in catching and shearing the wolf?" "Oh no, but I have a right to shear him." "Well, if you will be so mad and obstinate, go; only take care that the wolf does not shear you."

Mr. Hall had a high opinion of the talents and piety of his father. He said, "My father, sir, was a man of genius, and possessed a powerful mind; he was one of the last of the race of ministers who preached allegorically. One of the finest practical sermons I ever heard him deliver was from those singular words, *The snuffers and the candlestick were of pure gold.* Mr. Hall repeated the parts of the sermon to us from memory for half an hour or more. It was very ingenious. I only recollect the principal ideas: "These words were emblematical of the purity required in the Christian character, as golden candlesticks, which were to be employed in their Master's use. They must be pure as fine gold; hence the frequent allusion in Scripture to the term gold—*As gold tried in the fire*, &c. The snuffers, also, were to be of *pure gold.* Their uses: they were employed for the purpose of improving the light, not to put it out; this is typical of the value, the necessity and advantage of Christian reproof and admonition, which should be used, as snuffers, with caution and with a steady hand, lest, in removing the excrescences, and endeavouring to improve the light, you should extinguish it; there must be no rashness or improper feelings. Our motives must be pure as gold, in order to refine and brighten the character, to give light to all around, *like a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid*," &c., &c.

Mr. Hall informed me of the loss he had sustained by a London

bookseller, to the amount of several hundred pounds, which were part of the profits arising from his publications. He was perfectly tranquil, and pitied rather than condemned the person.* This afforded me an opportunity of requesting him to repair the loss by publishing a volume of sermons. I suggested two or three favourite discourses to him. "Oh, sir," he replied, "it would be a great undertaking for me: there would be not only the manual labour of writing and preparing them for the press, but I have great difficulty in pleasing myself. I have ideas, sir, that I cannot express in any language so as to give another person an adequate conception of them. I never write any thing, sir, for the press, without Dr. Johnson's large dictionary on the table, as that is the standard, you know, sir, of the English language: by this means I get the proper acceptation of the words, in order to convey my meaning." I said, "But, sir, you never have this difficulty in the pulpit in the choice of expressions. Your friends always admire your peculiar felicity in the choice of words, and the adaptation of them to the precise ideas. We have frequently remarked that, if it were possible to take your sermons as delivered extempore, they might be immediately printed. I assure you, sir, without the least flattery, I have *heard* sermons from you superior to any you have published." "No, sir," he replied, "that is impossible; it is only your partiality; they cannot be so correct and finished as when they are prepared in the closet. Besides, sir, you must remember that the eye and the ear are very different critics; what will pass on hearing, the eye would immediately detect." "Yes, sir," I replied; "but, on the other hand, you must recollect there is the fire of the sanctuary, and the enthusiasm kindled by the subject, and the excitement of an audience, all calculated to produce strains of eloquence which cannot be recalled or invented in retirement. However, I am not singular in this opinion, sir; our friend, Dr. Gregory, has frequently made similar remarks." "Well, sir, there may be something in what you say, but *he* is partial too." I begged that he would pardon the suggestion, and reminded him of the claims of his rising family, adding, "Now, sir, if you will prepare one volume of sermons for the press, I will engage to give you a thousand pounds immediately for it, and you shall have no farther trouble with printers or booksellers." "Ah, sir," he replied, "you talk like a man of business who has been accustomed to work for money. Why, sir, I could not write for money: impossible! I should continually be thinking of the rule of three. If a volume of sermons would fetch a thousand pounds, how much would it be for a sermon? and how much for a page? and how much for

* This instance was one of very many which illustrated Mr. Hall's kindness and disinterestedness. The bookseller referred to belonged to Mr. Hall's denomination, and for the support of his family, blended trade with his ministry. As might be expected, he was not very successful in either. At the time of his bankruptcy, he owed Mr. Hall about £300, the proceeds of his funeral sermon for the Princess Charlotte, which passed through sixteen editions.* "I am very sorry, sir," said he to a friend; "Mr. B. is a very worthy man. Half a man in the ministry, and half a man in business, spoils both, sir. He was once very kind to me, sir, and I shall try to think no more about it." He was urged to prove the debt, and take his portion of the dividend paid, but his reply was, "No, sir, let it be divided among the other creditors; many of them do not know his character so well as I do, and a good dividend will tend to raise him in their estimation."—B.

* See vol. i., p. 177-201.

a line? Why, sir, it would so engross my imagination, I could not get on at all; the very process would absolutely stultify me."

About this period he had read Mills's History of India, of which he gave me an account, and was quite delighted with it, from its having enlarged his knowledge of Indian affairs. He said that he had never understood the East Indian question so well before, and that he was an advocate for the *extinction* of the charter, which he considered was a monopoly equally injurious to both countries.

On the day of his weekly lecture, while at dinner, he appeared very thoughtful, and at length said, "I mean to preach to-night from these words: *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.* Did you ever hear me from that text at Cambridge?" I replied in the affirmative. "Well, then, I must change my subject, sir; for, as you have heard it before, I shall not like to preach from it again." Mr. Hall had a great objection for any of his friends to hear him a second time from any text, although his manner of treating it would be very different. I begged that he would not change it, as I should like much to hear him preach from it again. After some persuasion, he consented; and a wonderful sermon it was. He spoke of the Divine Being as "a rest, the home and dwelling-place of his people." I remember one striking sentence, which produced an effect almost indescribable: "All worlds meet in thee, thou vast Sensorium of the universe!" He alluded to home as a man's dwelling-place; that, however distant a man may be on a journey, amid all the difficulties, trials, and treatment he meets with, he consoles his mind with frequent thoughts of home; in which spot, however humble, is associated all that is tender and endearing in the relations of life. In such circumstances, he frequently anticipates the welcome which awaits him on his return. The Divine Being is that to a Christian which home is to a weary traveller: it is his dwelling-place, the stay, the solace, the centre and rest of his spirit; and hence he is constantly anticipating his arrival at home. But then it becomes necessary, before these complacent thoughts of the Divine Being can be properly entertained, that the breach should be repaired. Sin has made a breach between God and his creatures; Jesus Christ is the *great repairer of the breach:* we must, therefore, be reconciled to God, through the death of his Son, who is our peacemaker; who hath assured us there is room enough in his Father's house for all his people: *In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you,* &c.

We had made up our minds to return the following day, but had not mentioned this to Mr. Hall, knowing that we should have a difficulty in leaving him. The next morning, on meeting Mrs. Greene, he thus accosted her: "I am quite astonished, madam, to find you are out of your mind." Mrs. G. was much alarmed at this sudden attack, and said, "I really do not know what you mean, Mr. Hall." "Why, ma'am, from what you said to Mrs. Hall last night, you must be out of your mind; she tells me that you and Mr. Greene intend to leave us to-day. If you do so, I shall consider that we have not made you

comfortable, especially as you have travelled such a long way to see us. I cannot think of your going so soon." When he came into the breakfast-room, he expostulated with me. I said that we had already stayed longer than we intended; but if he would allow us to go the next morning in peace, with his blessing, we would consent to remain till the morrow. "I will make no promise," was his reply: *sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* Such was the great kindness of this amiable and extraordinary man. We left, the following day, with great regret.

"July 21, 1822.

"My dear Friend,

"I write in the utmost haste, to inform you that we shall be very happy to see you and Mrs. Greene next Saturday, to spend the Lord's Day with us, and as much time afterward as you can make convenient. I shall most certainly be at home; and it will be most gratifying to me and Mrs. Hall to see you and Mrs. Greene. As to returning with you, I must at present decline it; I have already been so very much out this summer, and have other engagements. Mrs. Hall unites with me in most affectionate remembrances to you and Mrs. Greene.

"I am, dear sir,

"Yours most affectionately,

"Robert Hall."

I received this letter at Oundle, in Northamptonshire, and immediately went to Leicester alone in my gig, with the hope of bringing Mr. Hall back to spend a week with us. He consented to my request, on my promising to bring him home by the following Sabbath. Before commencing our journey he prayed earnestly for his family, and commended his friend and himself to the protection of Almighty God, particularly praying "for preservation, *that the stones of the field may be in league with us.*"

We had not been long on the road before the sky became overcharged, and it seemed to gather clouds as for a tempest. We had many indications of a storm before our arrival at Market Harborough. On entering the town, I said, "I hope, sir, you will lay down your pipe, as it does not look well to smoke when passing through a town." "Oh dear, sir," was his reply, "that does not signify; it is not as if I were a stranger; everybody knows me here, sir; it will be thought nothing of." "But, indeed, in a town, sir, it does not look well." However, when we reached the first house he laid down his pipe, and said, with great archness and playfulness, "There, to please your majesty, I have laid down my pipe."

While we were at dinner the tempest came on. There was much thunder and lightning, accompanied with violent rain. Mr. Hall was quite delighted at having escaped the storm. As soon as the weather cleared up, we set off for the next stage. He lighted his pipe at the first turnpike, and became exceedingly interesting. The direction to the man at the gate was "to place his thumb at the top of the pipe and put the bowl into the fire," but when he brought it he put the

pipe into his mouth to try if it was lighted, which Mr. Hall observed, and chided him for so doing; immediately the man wiped the pipe with his apron, and presented it, which called forth the thanks and admiration of Mr. Hall, adding, "How very respectfully the man behaved to us, sir." When we reached Rockingham Forest, he said, "I never was here before: how beautiful! how natural! this is true forest scenery. Only think, sir; we may imagine ourselves carried back to the time of Robin Hood and Little John: I dare say it was much in the same state at that period, and extended to the other forests below Nottingham. Only observe those thickets, sir; what advantages they afford for concealment! we may imagine Robin Hood and Little John in one of them." As we advanced towards Corby, I told him that he would see a dull, poverty-looking village. After we had passed through it, as nothing seemed to escape his notice, he said, "I cannot agree with you, sir, that it is a poverty-looking village; I am agreeably disappointed. I observed there were no broken panes in the windows, and that is no sign of poverty, sir. Then the houses are mostly built of stones, pointed; that is no sign of poverty, sir. Then many of the chimneys are built of the same kind of stone, pointed, and in a good state of repair; that is no sign of poverty, sir." As I perceived that he was determined to like it, from a playful opposition, I dropped the subject.

We observed another storm gathering, and therefore hastened towards Weldon. Just as we entered the town, and were under shelter in a gateway at the inn, the rain fell in torrents. After tea it cleared up. I again ordered the gig to be prepared. The face of the sky appeared very doubtful when we commenced the last stage, which was a distance of eight miles. Suddenly the sun burst through the clouds, and for the last five miles we had a beautiful, serene summer's evening. Mr. Hall was in high spirits, and in a devotional frame of mind. He considered that our escape from the violence of the tempest was quite providential. "Why, sir," said he, "if we had been exposed to this tempest, we might have taken our deaths from cold; we could have found no shelter, for the trees would have been dangerous; and no clothing could have protected us: we should have been wet through." "It is a great mercy, sir," I replied. He then exclaimed, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*" I added, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*" Mr. Hall continued, "*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.*" And then addressing me, "Go on, sir; I think we can manage between us to repeat the whole Psalm. It is a beautiful Psalm, sir." I continued, "*Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.*" Thus we responded, alternately, to the end, and saw fresh beauties in this song of thanksgiving. We arrived safe, about nine o'clock, at the end of our journey.

Mr. Hall was delighted with this part of the country, and particularly with the beautiful woodland scenery, which is studded with noblemen's seats for several miles, in a semicircular form, from south to

north, near Oundle. The first is Barnwell Castle, the seat of the Duke of Buccleugh; next to this is the seat of Lord Lilford; then the residence of the Lady Fitzpatrick, at Farming Woods, formerly belonging to Lord Ossory. Then the lordship of Biggen, now belonging to Watts Russel, Esq.; Lord Cardigan's seat, at Dean; Lord Westmoreland's, at Aythorpe; Earl Carysfort's, at Elton; and last, not least, Earl Fitzwilliam's, that prince of noblemen, at Milton. Such a cluster of noblemen's seats, perhaps, is not to be found so near any other market-town in the kingdom. I have been informed that, during the last war, oak timber was annually shipped from these woods and forests, to the amount of half a million sterling, for the use of his majesty's dock-yards. Mr. Hall appeared interested with this information. A return of the pain in his back, unfortunately, prevented him from riding out to gratify his curiosity. He was therefore necessitated to have recourse to large doses of laudanum every night, in order to alleviate his extreme suffering. He generally took a pipe with him when he retired to his chamber, being in the habit of rising in the night, and reclining on the bedside carpets, for the purpose of smoking and reading for an hour or two, when wakeful, or when the pain came on. I lent him a volume of Beddome's Sermons, which he read through during this visit. I inquired his opinion of the sermons. He was delighted with them, and surprised when I told him that they had not reached a second edition. "I am astonished at that, sir, for they are very evangelical, and there is a good choice of subjects: there is a bone, and sinew, and marrow in them, that shows a great mind. I like them, sir, because they are so full of thought; they furnish matter for the mind to dwell upon. It is true they are very short; but it must be remembered that they are posthumous, and were never intended for publication: they are little more than skeletons. I like them the better for their compactness. It shows the taste of the age, sir: they would have been more approved had they been long, and verbose, and showy. They supply materials for thinking, sir: some persons, however, don't like to think, sir. In short, sir, I do not know any sermons of the kind equal to them in the English language. I believe they are destined to be much more extensively read and appreciated." I mentioned several instances in which we had lent them, and they had been found eminently useful; in families, and in sick-chambers, where they could be read in twenty minutes, without fatigue to the patient.

He preached one evening, during his visit to Oundle, from *Man dieth and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?* He chose this subject on account of several recent deaths in our family connexions. The discourse was very impressive, particularly that part of it in which he pursued the inquiry, *Where is he?* For a few minutes he gave us one of the finest metaphysical disquisitions upon matter and spirit that I ever heard or read. His object was to prove that matter is infinitely divisible; and that the soul is independent, and will go into a separate state. *Man giveth up the ghost.* Here he showed the folly and absurdity, as well as the unscriptural notion, of

the doctrine of materialism; and, with great solemnity, pursued the inquiry, *Where is he?* He followed the spirit of a good man to his entrance into the heavenly state; "he pierced the invisible world, and looked into eternity," and described the *blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord.* He then referred to the condition of the wicked man: *Where is* HE? and described the awful situation of those *who die in their sins;* that one of the severest denunciations of the Saviour was, that they should *die in their sins.* If ye believe not that I *am* (*he* is supplied by the translators here, improperly), *ye shall die in your sins.*" He repeated it with great emphasis and earnestness, "*Die in your sins!*" then entered into a warm expostulation, "*Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* why *will ye die?*" with invitations to come to the Saviour for life. I took no notes of this sermon, which I regret.

It is impossible to give an accurate account of the various topics of conversation which passed in the course of the week, while Mr. Hall was with us. Never did we enjoy his company so much. When free from pain, he experienced that exquisite state of feeling described by Dr. Paley, when speaking of the "transition from pain to ease, which none knew but those who have experienced it." At such times he became quite playful and entertaining; at other times he was serious and devout. Mr. Hall was pre-eminently a man of prayer. When reading the Scriptures in the family, he pursued an admirable plan for exciting attention by occasional observations on particular passages, or on the phraseology of the text, and by inducing a few minutes' conversation by interrogatory remarks: "That is very striking: did you observe it in that connexion? What do you think of that, sir? How absurd, on the Socinian notion, is this language! Why, sir, it would be quite nonsense."

On the Saturday morning we left Oundle for Leicester. Mr. Hall was fond of fast driving, but wished for a long time at the different places where we rested. "Now give me all the time you can, sir, when we stop. It is a maxim with me, that the present place is the best place. You know, sir, I can lie on three chairs and ease my back. We need not hurry to get to Leicester, sir; it will be quite time enough if we arrive by ten or eleven o'clock. Mrs. Hall will not expect me earlier. She will be surprised to see me before that time, and I do not want to meet any person to-night." I remonstrated, knowing the difficulty there was in getting him to start. "Well then, sir, we will say not before nine o'clock, if you please." This preliminary settled, he started the subject of the funds. "I do not know," said he, "how it is that I never could understand the principle of the funding system, particularly the sinking fund. I cannot see how the debt is to be redeemed by it: perhaps it is owing to my stupidity. Now, sir, I wish that you would give me some information about this financial arrangement." I said that, unless the sinking fund was intended to mystify and deceive, I could not account for it. Would it not be better to pay off annually a portion of the debt, on a plan similar to that which is adopted in common life? For example, if a man owes a thousand pounds, and has no capital to pay it, but is in

the receipt of an income of three hundred a year, he agrees with his creditors to pay one hundred per annum towards the amount for which he is indebted. Thus the debt and interest are annually diminished, and both parties are benefited. Mr. Hall condemned the present system, and then launched forth against it. I soon discovered that he understood more of the subject than he would acknowledge, which was his usual plan for eliciting conversation. He was well acquainted with the writings of Dr. Price, and other political economists; he then eulogized Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, especially his principles of *free* trade and the *subdivision of labour*. "These," said Mr. Hall, "are sure principles, sir; and they are destined to triumph." In short, there was not a subject connected with general knowledge the general principles of which he did not understand. Persons were sure to derive instruction from Mr. Hall, if they drew him into conversation; either by not assenting, or by modest inquiries for information. His talents would have rendered him a first-rate statesman, being well acquainted with international law and the rights of belligerants. He had read and studied Grotius, Vattel, and the most celebrated authorities. By his brilliant and overpowering eloquence, he would have shone as a star of the first magnitude in either house of Parliament. With the science of jurisprudence he was well acquainted: he had an extensive knowledge of the common, civil, and canon laws. I have heard barristers with whom he has conversed, and who were absolutely astonished at his knowledge of these subjects, exclaim, "Where could this man get this wisdom?" They have frequently declared that they learned more in two or three hours from him, respecting the general principles of law, than they had done from books.

We arrived safely at Leicester, after breaking the shafts of my gig by the additional weight which was thrown upon them by a contrived horizontal position of Mr. Hall for the purpose of alleviating the pain in his back. Mrs. Hall was anxious to learn whether Mr. Hall was aware that it was the time of the assizes at Leicester, when many of the barristers attended his meeting-house. I told her that, as he had not alluded to the circumstance, I did not think he recollected it. She begged that I would not mention it, as it was too late, and it might make Mr. Hall uneasy; and we knew that it would not matter if he were thrown upon his resources.

When Mr. Hall arrived at the meeting-house there were a number of the barristers present. As soon as he entered the pulpit, I saw, by the expression of his countenance, that he recognised them; but it was remarkable that, had he been informed of the event, he could scarcely have fixed on a subject more useful and appropriate. The discourse was founded on these words, *The truth as it is in Jesus:* not as it is in Moses, in Paul, or any other authority, but THE *truth as it is in* JESUS.* It was observed that most of the barristers appeared to feel oppressed by the closeness of attention which was requisite fully to estimate the weight of evidence produced. Any person who

* The notes of this sermon may be found in this volume.—B.

was not in the secret would have imagined that it was prepared for the occasion.

As we were walking home, I said to Mr. Hall, "What an astonishing sermon you have given us this morning, sir! I never heard you deliver a discourse with so much rapidity." "Why, sir," he replied, "my only chance of getting through was by galloping on as fast as I could: I was thrown on my resources, and had no conception of its being the assizes till I entered the pulpit and saw the counsellors. I never preached from that subject before, sir." I said, "But when could you prepare the sermon, sir? for we have been together all the week, and you have had no time." "Why, sir, I will tell you; I thought of it at intervals, and during the night. Beddome's Sermons, which you lent me, suggested the subject, and I fixed the outline in my mind, and perhaps was excited by the unexpected appearance of men of talent."

Being desirous to learn from Mr. Hall the particulars of the interview between the celebrated Mr. Hone and himself, I mentioned to Mr. Hall that I had been informed Mr. Hone called upon him, at Watford, for an explanation and an apology, and that he complied with the request. "Well, sir, what of that? Who told you? What have you heard?" I replied, "It has been stated that Mr. Hone considered his reputation was injured by being coupled with Carlile, in the Reply to the Strictures in the Christian Guardian, where he is charged with blasphemy. He denied the charge, and begged to be informed on what work or passage in his writings the charge was founded. "There can be no mistake, sir," said Mr. Hone, "for in the next page you define blasphemy, which you say is 'the speaking contumeliously of God?'" "Well, sir," said Mr. Hall, "the account is mainly correct; I was wrong, and I certainly did apologize to Mr. Hone; there is nothing contrary to true dignity in that, sir. I once made you an apology when you were a young man, sir, on discovering that I had been mistaken. To confess an error is an act of common justice between man and man.* Now, sir, I will tell you the sequel. I said, 'I am not acquainted, Mr. Hone, with your writings; but I am bound to believe you when you say that you have never made use of blasphemous language, and that you are a believer in Christianity; but by some means I have received the impression, in common with several other persons, that you cherished the same principles with Carlile. I hope, sir, as that is not the case, that you will take an early opportunity of making your belief known to the public; it will be the best method of doing away with the unfavourable impression.' Mr. Hone left me perfectly satisfied.† Sir," he continued, "it is false honour, and false dignity, when we refuse to apologize for an error. Men frequently subject themselves to the necessity

* See this edition of Mr. Hall's Works, vol. iii., p. 259, letter liii. to the Rev. James Phillips.

† I cannot deny myself the pleasure of placing on record, in this place, the fact that Mr. Hone, a man of splendid talents and learning, whose name is identified with the literature of his country, but who was long entangled in the meshes of infidelity, became, for many years before his death, a decided and eminent Christian. More transparency of mind or warmth of heart I never expect to meet with on earth. It was my happiness and profit to enjoy his friendship, and to be charmed with his childlike simplicity and fervent devotion. His name will long be fragrant to a large circle of

either of telling a lie,* or hazarding their own lives, or the life of a fellow-creature, merely to support an imaginary dignity." "Yes, sir," I replied: "this reminds me of a circumstance which occurred some few years since, at the opening of a new session in Parliament. The late Mr. Whitbread having inveighed, in strong terms, against the conduct of Mr. Perceval's administration, was called to order by Mr. Perceval, who rose, with great warmth, and said the honourable gentleman was pursuing the same course of argument and invectives, in opposing the measures of government, as he had done in the former sessions; and then became quite personal, adding, 'So true is it—

"Destroy the web of sophistry, in vain;
The creature's at its dirty work again."

Mr. Whitbread instantly called him to order, and demanded satisfaction for such contemptuous language. Mr. Perceval, instead of acknowledging his error and making a direct apology, shielded himself by the subterfuge that 'he did not mean anything personal.' Now, sir, not only Mr. Whitbread, but all who heard or read Mr. Perceval's language, must know that he was personal. The whole point was in the words 'the creature' and 'the dirty work;' stripped of its personality, there could be no meaning in the allusion." "Certainly not," said Mr. Hall; "Mr. Perceval ought at once to have expressed his regret for having wounded the feelings of Mr. Whitbread, or confessed that he had been betrayed by the heat of debate, and have begged his pardon; that, sir, would have been noble and truly dignified."

While Mr. Hall was at all times willing to concede to the rights of others, he was equally tenacious of his own; and such was his commanding appearance, that none dared to commit the slightest rudeness in his company.

Some years before this period, he learned, from undoubted authority, that a clergyman of his acquaintance had made some unjust and illiberal charges against the Baptists and himself. An explanation was demanded, which was for a long time delayed. Mr. Hall, consequently, declined all intercourse with the clergyman. Two mutual friends at length waited on Mr. Hall, to inquire the terms upon which he would meet this gentleman at a dinner-party. He replied, that he had not the slightest objection to do so, provided their friend would either make him an apology, or declare that he did not allude to himself directly or indirectly. On this being stated to the gentleman, he chose the latter alternative. The parties met, and a partial reconciliation took place. When Mr. Hall informed me of the circumstance, I said, "You know, sir, from the best authority, that he did allude to you, both directly and indirectly." "Very well, sir," he replied, "Mr. —— had his choice, either to deny it or to make an apology. If he chose to tell a lie, that is not my concern; my honour, as a gentleman and a minister, is satisfied."

On the Christian duty of forgiveness, Mr. Hall was of opinion that

attached friends, who will cherish the remembrance of his Christian virtues, and his powerful advocacy of the principles of civil and religious liberty.—B.

* Lord Bacon says, "When a man lieth he is brave towards God and a coward towards men."—GREENE.

the injury or offence ought first to be acknowledged according to the words of our Saviour: *Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.*

Mr. Hall showed me his copy of Walton's Polyglot, and explained some of its various readings. This led to a discussion of several passages in the Hebrew text. I asked his opinion of the eighty-fourth Psalm, part of which appeared to be unintelligible, both in the common English version, and in the version by Cranmer. He immediately turned to the Psalm, and translated it into English. When reading the fifth verse, he said, "You are right, sir; there is a difficulty; I think the sense cannot be given without paraphrase."

On my expressing my surprise at the facility with which Mr. Hall read the original, he replied, "Why, sir, it has become familiar to me by practice. I make a point of translating a chapter or psalm every day; and, if you remember, I took lessons from Lyon, the Hebrew professor at Cambridge. I studied the language when at Bristol, but afterward neglected it." Mr. Hall insisted on the importance of reading with points, and of paying great attention to the irregular verbs.

I asked his opinion of the translation of the request of Naaman, the Assyrian leper, 2 Kings, v., 18. Mr. Hall turned to the passage. I observed that, if the verbs would allow of the past tense, it would read thus: "Concerning this thing will the Jehovah pardon thy servant, in my lord's *going* into the house of Rimmon to bow himself there, when he *leaned* on my hand, and I *bowed* myself in the house of Rimmon: in my *bowing* in the house of Rimmon, will Jehovah extend pardon, I pray, to thy servant in this thing?" I observed, "This would give a consistency to the whole story: here is a sense of guilt and deep anxiety on the part of Naaman; a mind awakened to the knowledge of Jehovah as the *only* living and true God, and an expression of an earnest desire for pardon. Then the answer of the prophet harmonizes: *Go in peace;* as much as to say, He will pardon you." Mr. Hall replied, "There is a difficulty in the passage; but let us consult Poole's Synopsis." He did so, and read the paraphrase. "No, sir," he continued, "Poole is against you; he contends that it must be regarded as an employment of Naaman, *ex officio*, as a minister of state in his personal attendance on his master, and not in a religious capacity." Mr. Hall added, "I have my doubts about the passage." I thought, however, that he seemed inclined to the sense given by Poole, whom he praised as a very valuable writer, and then dropped the subject.

Mr. Hall frequently observed, as the result of his researches, that the obvious popular sense of a Scripture passage was generally the true sense.

The following morning I left Leicester, in company with Mrs. Hall, who remained with us about three weeks. After her return, Mrs. Greene received the following letter from Mr. Hall:

"August 30, 1822.

"My dear Madam,

"Agreeably to your desire, I sit down to write a few lines, to inform you of Mrs. Hall's safe arrival. She got to Leicester about eight o'clock on Wednesday evening, a good deal fatigued with the journey, and complaining very much with a headache. During the greater part of the ride she had for her companions two Frenchmen, who behaved with great civility; after they had left, a very rough, unsocial being accompanied her during the remainder of her journey. Since her return, she has pretty well recovered her fatigue; and with the exception of some pain in her face and cheeks, is in tolerable health. She desires me to express the deep sense she entertains of the great kindness she met with under your hospitable roof, and, with her acknowledgments on that score, you must permit me, however inadequately, to express my own. It was unfortunate for her that repeated attacks of indisposition prevented her from availing herself of all the advantages of her situation; had she been capable of taking more air and exercise, I have little doubt she would have derived essential benefit from the excursion. I am sorry, on your own account, she was so poorly, because I am conscious that an invalid is at best but a troublesome inmate, capable of giving much trouble with little pleasure in return. I most sincerely thank you and dear Mr. Greene for your kind attention, which left nothing undone which friendship could dictate, towards the alleviation of her complaint. I believe regular exercise, could she be prevailed upon to take it, would do more for her than any medicine; her whole system needs to be braced and strengthened. I shall endeavour to exert myself to the utmost to induce her to be frequently in the air, and to take as much exercise as she can bear without fatigue: if to this she could be prevailed upon to take bark and red wine, I think it would be of great benefit to her. When she is worst, I uniformly find the most difficulty to prevail upon her to take what might be beneficial. The rest of my family are, through mercy, tolerably well. It will give Mrs. Hall and myself the greatest pleasure to see you at Leicester: we fully anticipate that pleasure, at the farthest, should we be spared to see another summer. Mrs. Hall unites with me in most grateful and affectionate remembrances to you and Mr. Greene.

"I am, dear madam, your affectionate friend,

"Robert Hall."

"September 24, 1823.

"My dear Friend,

"It is a serious disappointment to Mrs. Hall, as well as to myself, that we have not, before this, enjoyed the pleasure of a visit from you and Mrs. Greene at Leicester. I have had such a succession of engagements, as, combined with yours, have hitherto deprived us of that pleasure, and write now to inform you that next week I shall certainly be at home, and if you and dear Mrs. Greene can favour us with your company then, we shall esteem it a great favour. On the 7th of next

month I am engaged to preach at Kimbolton; the next day at St. Ives; and shall spend the succeeding Sabbath at Cambridge.

"Mrs. Hall will, I believe, accompany a friend of hers to London in about a fortnight hence; so that the time I have suggested is, I fear, the only one previous to next winter. Should you decline our proposal respecting that time (which, however, I earnestly hope you will not), let me entreat you to promise us a visit during the winter. There are many fine days in that season when travelling is not unpleasant; and no season is so favourable to social fireside enjoyment. I hope, however, we may promise ourselves the pleasure of seeing you next week. Mrs. Hall is gone with three of our children to Marine Baths, in this neighbourhood, from whence I am going to fetch her on Saturday. It is with her knowledge, and by her request, that I have suggested next week as the time when we hope to have the pleasure of seeing you. Her reason for going to the Baths was not so much the state of her own health as that of our children, particularly the youngest, who has been very poorly a long time. Mrs. Hall unites with me in most affectionate and grateful remembrances to you and to Mrs. Greene. It will be a great disappointment to her, as well as to myself, not to see you.

"I remain, my dear friend,

"Yours most affectionately,

"Robert Hall."

On receiving this invitation, I wrote to fix the day of our being with Mr. Hall at Leicester; preferring to go there at once, rather than defer our visit till the winter.

On the Saturday after our arrival, we took breakfast in his study; and, after family prayer, I remained alone with him. About eleven o'clock I arose, observing that he would probably wish to prepare for the Sabbath. He replied, "Oh no, sir, don't go yet: sit down; I want to have a little talk. I do not know what subject to select. I have been preaching here so long, that I find great difficulty in fixing upon new subjects; and you know, sir, I do not like to preach the same sermons again." "Why, sir," I replied; "you never had any difficulty of this kind at Cambridge: you generally expounded in the morning, and we observed that the exposition suggested a topic for the afternoon discourse; and you will remember that, in addition to your stated expositions, you frequently selected a Psalm, or an interesting subject of Scripture biography—for instance, the character of Abraham, Eli, &c. We enjoyed the expositions, sir, exceedingly." "But, sir," said Mr. Hall, "my people at Leicester do not like expositions. I have frequently tried them, and it does not do to expound when the people are not interested. My congregation, sir, is composed principally of plain people, who are engaged in manufactories, and who have not enjoyed the advantages of education. They are by no means so intellectual as our friends at Cambridge; I am sorry they do not like expositions, for I am convinced that more solid instruction may be derived from them than from sermons. I have

been astonished, sir," continued Mr. Hall, "at the superior knowledge of the Scotch, compared with the English, in this respect. It is the uniform practice of clergymen in the Church of Scotland to expound every Sabbath morning. On these occasions, the people have their Bibles before them; and, by this plan, are accustomed to hear and to read the Scriptures in their connexion, which is a very great advantage, sir." "Well, sir," I said, "will you allow me to suggest a plan? Suppose you were to commence a course, and continue it at intervals —for instance, every third week, or once a month: you might thus gradually accustom the people to it." "Why, sir, that is a very good idea; I never thought of that before, sir. I think it may do very well; I will try that plan, sir." I reminded Mr. Hall of the order of his expositions at Cambridge: the Gospel of John, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistle to the Philippians, the two Epistles of Peter, and the three Epistles of John; and added, "We were very much interested, sir, in your remarks upon the Acts of the Apostles, and especially with the geographical information respecting the different places the apostles visited; the reception they met with; the manners and customs of the inhabitants; their present condition," &c. "Yes, sir," he replied, thoughtfully, "it is a most interesting book." "There was one thing, sir, that you frequently noticed, which made a deep impression upon my mind. It was the strong, incidental evidence of the divinity of our Lord: it breaks in upon us without any formality of proof. The apostles seem to take it for granted as a first principle, which was universally received and believed by the first converts." "You are quite right, sir; it is a powerful argument; I have been frequently struck with it. There is no meaning in the language employed by the apostles in speaking of our Lord, if opposed to this supposition. The incidental evidences, as you observe, are certainly irresistible."

After sitting with Mr. Hall some time, I left him on perceiving that his mind was at work. He spent the remainder of the day in his study.

On the Sabbath morning I found him in the upper kitchen reclining upon the dresser: in one hand was his Bible, and with the other he held his pipe. On my entering, perceiving that I felt surprised, he exclaimed, "What! are you frightened, sir?" "Rather so," I replied: "I had no idea of finding you here." "Why, sir, I derive great relief from lying on the boards of the dresser in this posture; it eases my back amazingly, sir; you cannot think how comfortable I find it." He did not then allude to the subject of his discourses, but announced from the pulpit his intention of expounding the Acts of the Apostles, and then repeated the topics of our conversation on the preceding day. His remarks were to the following effect: that it was his uniform plan at Cambridge to expound the Scriptures in the morning; that the practice obtained generally in Scotland; and to this fact might be attributed the superior biblical knowledge of the Scotch to that of the English, the former being in the habit of reading and hearing the Scriptures in their connexion; that the practice of preaching from single texts was of modern invention; that in most of our dis-

senting churches, the Scriptures formerly were expounded; it was, therefore, his intention to expound in future, not every Sabbath, but once in three weeks or a month. He then added, that, in case the plan was not generally interesting, he would relinquish it. After this preface, Mr. Hall read the first eleven verses of the Acts of the Apostles, finishing with the account of the ascension. In the evening he took his text from Luke, xxiv., 52: *And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* The sermon was a sequel to the morning exposition. If the reader will refer to the account of the ascension, in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and compare it with this verse in Luke, he will better understand the following brief and imperfect outline.

Mr. Hall observed, The cause of the apostles' joy was the astonishing scene which they had just witnessed. *And he led them out as far as Bethany*, &c. While they were conversing with their Lord and Master on the mount called Olivet, he was taken up, and *a cloud received him out of their sight.* The sacred historian has not informed us as to the nature of this cloud, but there is no doubt that it was *the cloud*—the Shekinah—the visible symbol of the Divine presence. "This, my brethren, was the day of the Redeemer's solemn public inauguration, when he received the reins of universal empire. The apostles looked steadfastly; they saw him enter into the cloud, into the bosom of the Deity, and veiled in the insufferable brightness of the Divine glory. He had told Nathanael that he should hereafter see greater things than these: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.* This was now fulfilled: they beheld him in the splendour of his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father; and the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him as he entered into his glory. Two of these angels descended while they were looking steadfastly towards heaven, and stood by them in white apparel, *which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* Observe, it is said, *he shall come in like manner;* and, in another place, *he shall come in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father;* and here it is said, *he shall come as ye have seen him go into heaven.* What an astonishing scene, my brethren, was this! such as the world never witnessed before; and as soon as the apostles had recovered from their transport, well might they worship him, and return to Jerusalem with great joy; they witnessed the ascension of their risen Redeemer, after his public recognition by the Divine Being as Lord of heaven and earth, *thrones, and principalities, and powers being made subject unto him:* this it was that filled them with great joy. From this time they assumed a new character. The Jews were astonished at the boldness with which they preached the Gospel at Jerusalem, and publicly charged the Jews with the murder of their Lord: *This Jesus, whom ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, is both Lord and Christ; whom God hath raised up.* Such was their forti-

tude, that neither bonds, nor stripes, nor imprisonment, nor death itself, could shake their resolutions : *none of these things moved them.*"

I feel it impossible to follow Mr. Hall any farther. When portraying the scene upon the mount, his unrivalled powers of description placed the subject in such a view, and his impassioned manner produced such an impression, that we might well say, *Whether in the body or out of the body we could not tell.*

Of course, this subject became a matter of conversation in the evening. Mr. Hall commenced by saying, " Well, sir, you see I have taken your hint, but I do not know how my people will like the plan." I replied, " Every one must have been interested, sir; I had no idea that you intended to commence to-day." " Why, sir, I had neither studied the exposition nor the sermon, until you suggested the plan yesterday ; I have my doubts, sir, whether it is generally approved. One of the most intelligent of my hearers came to me in the vestry, and told me that he preferred my sermons to expositions." I requested Mr. Hall to repeat the exercises of to-day at Cambridge, and added, that I was certain that his friends there would be highly gratified.

At supper time, Mr. Hall inquired whether I had heard Mr. Irving, who was then much followed in London. I replied in the affirmative. " Well, sir," said he, " and how did you like him ?" I expressed great disappointment, and gave it as my opinion that his statements were too bold, and his manner declamatory and theatrical. I then instanced the harsh and unfeeling manner in which that gentleman would repeat such solemn words of the apostle, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.* " That is very bad taste, sir," said Mr. Hall; " your account exactly corresponds, however, with the description I have received from several persons, whose judgments I respect ; I can only form my opinion, sir, from his publication, having never heard him ; but, as comparisons have been instituted, I am careful in stating an opinion, lest it should be attributed to jealousy. If his ' Orations' be really eloquent, we are all *wrong*, sir; our standard of eloquence is *wrong ;* all the great masters are *wrong ;* Demosthenes, Cicero, Fox, Burke, Pitt, and Sheridan, have all been mistaken."

The next morning a gentleman from London endeavoured to persuade Mr. Hall to visit that city, and named several reasons which he thought might induce a compliance with the request. " I do not like the bustle of preaching in London, sir," said Mr. Hall. I then turned to the gentleman, and told him that he had not taken the right tack with Mr. Hall, and recommended him to press his wishes on the ground of the good which Mr. Hall might effect, by correcting the bad taste of the Londoners, who were running after Mr. Irving. Mr. Hall, who was lying upon the sofa, smoking, instantly rose, and replied, with great humour, " A pretty idea, indeed, sir ! So you wish me to go to London, and have the streets placarded with the time and place of preaching ; and the bills headed with large characters, ENGLAND AGAINST SCOTLAND FOREVER, HUZZA !" (laughing heartily.)

On Tuesday morning we took our leave of him. I think it was during this visit he informed me that he had preached a series of sermons at Leicester against Socinianism. "I should not," he said, "have entered upon the controversy, sir, had not the Unitarian minister thrown down the gauntlet; I was, therefore, necessitated to take it up at the request of my people. I preached one sermon, sir, to prove from the Scriptures the existence and agency of the devil. I wrote that sermon fairly out; what is become of it I cannot tell, sir. It was before me in this room (we were in his study); I left it on the table, and walked out for a few minutes; when I returned it was gone, sir. The window was open, just so, sir" (opening the window to show me); "I think, sir, the devil must have come in, and taken it away to prevent me from preaching it again, and doing him mischief: he disliked that sermon exceedingly, sir." "Perhaps, sir," I observed, "it was blown out of the window while you were absent." "No, sir, that could not be the case; we immediately searched the yard and garden, and also our neighbours' premises; but it was all in vain. Is it not extraordinary, sir?"*

In the summer of 1825, we promised again to visit Mr. Hall. On his return from an excursion to London, I received the following letters:

"July 14th, 1825.

"My dear Friend,

"I have been from home about three weeks, as have also my wife and family; myself at London and elsewhere, they at Ashby-de-la-Zouch; and they intend returning to-morrow. I am extremely sorry we have not yet had the pleasure of seeing you at Leicester, as you, I find, have been so kind as to propose. I have been, in some degree, unexpectedly engaged in a series of visits, with very little interruption; I intend now to stay at home till the latter end of the year; and, in the mean time, it will give us very great pleasure to see you as soon as ever you can come, after the children are returned to school: it will give us very great gratification. I am very sorry my absence from home should have occasioned an omission in replying to your kind favour; be assured nothing was ever farther from our intention than to neglect an old friend, or, rather, friends, whom we have so many reasons to love and esteem.

"The children will be returning to school soon; and if we hear nothing more from you previously, we will lose no time in informing you when they are gone, and requesting the fulfilment of your kind intention. I am glad to hear the unpleasant affair with * * * * * * is almost terminated: I was sorry to hear it had occasioned you so much uneasiness.

"I write this at your sister's, Miss Greene's, of Kettering, who informs me that you wrote to her about a fortnight since, to inquire about me of Mr. Hall, of Kettering. Your mother and sister are as well as usual, and desire to be affectionately remembered. I beg to be

* See the account of this sermon, volume iii., p. 41.

most affectionately remembered to dear Mrs. Greene. We count much upon seeing you, and of receiving the pleasure your society and that of Mrs. Greene never fails to impart to, dear sir,

"Your affectionate friend,

"Robert Hall.'

"August 11th, 1825.

"My dear Sir,

"Mrs. Hall and myself have been longing for an opportunity of enjoying your society under our humble roof; but we have been so situated, partly from domestic circumstances, and partly in consequence of my absence from home, that we have been compelled hitherto to deny ourselves that gratification. It is with great pleasure that I now write to assure you that we are in that state that I hope will render your visit comfortable, both to us and to yourselves. All our children are at school except the eldest; I have no journey in prospect; and we despair of ever finding an occasion more favourable to the pleasure we promise ourselves from an interview than the present. It will be a great satisfaction to me and Mrs. Hall if you can meet our wishes by visiting us (in company with dear Mrs. Greene, of course) as soon as possible. May we promise ourselves the pleasure of seeing you early in the next week; and that you will give us as much of your company as you can possibly spare? We long to see you; we have much to hear, and much to communicate; and among the greatest pleasures of life, I shall always place that of conversing with an old and esteemed friend.

"I hope you are not offended at our not having written on this subject sooner: it arose from a number of unforeseen occurrences, over which we had no control. I can truly say, my affection and esteem for you have suffered no abatement, and I am pretty confident never will; and in this declaration I would be understood to comprehend your excellent partner. Many changes have occurred since we had the pleasure of meeting, which it will give me great delight to have the opportunity of talking over with one of my oldest and dearest friends. Mrs. Hall, whose health is as usual, unites with me in most affectionate remembrances to dear Mrs. Greene and yourself.

"I remain, dear sir, with unabated affection and esteem,

"Your affectionate friend and brother,

"Robert Hall."

The first evening after our arrival at Leicester, I introduced the subject of an article which, to oblige the editor,* Mr. Hall had contributed to the Christian Repository for August, 1825, "On the Spiritual Condition and Prospects of the Jews," signed Philalethes.† "What! is it printed, sir?" said Mr. Hall. "Yes, sir; I have Philalethes with me." "Well, sir, it is very strange they have never sent me the number. I certainly was entitled to one for my trouble; I will take it with me, if you will fetch it, sir." I did so; and when

* The Rev Dr. Cox, of Hackney.—B.

† It appears in vol. ii. of this edition, p. 468.

he came into his study the next morning to breakfast, he said, "There, sir, is your magazine; I have read every line in it since we parted last night, while you have been asleep." This led to a conversation upon the article. Mr. Hall contended for the possibility of a pious Jew obtaining salvation without becoming a convert to Christianity. "He possesses," said he, "the Law and the Prophets; which, as our Lord himself affirmed, contain sufficient motives to repentance, with that expectation of a future Messiah, and of the spiritual benefits which he is appointed to confer, by which saints under the ancient economy were justified."

I mentioned to Mr. Hall that, in the opinion of many of his brethren in the ministry, his views upon the subject were too liberal, since the New Testament declares that there is no way of salvation but by faith in a crucified Saviour. In addition to the illustration given by Mr. Hall himself, when speaking "of a Jew being in an insulated situation, so as never to have had the Scriptures propounded to him," I observed that the argument might be strengthened by a reference to the situation of the Ten Tribes, who, if still in existence and seclusion, possess only their own Scriptures. Josephus speaks of them as being in a far country, north of the Euphrates, and superior in numbers to the Jews in Judea. Now as these Ten Tribes do not appear to have incurred the guilt of rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, it is possible that they may not have had any knowledge of his appearance; and, therefore, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the Christian terms of salvation had not been offered to them: consequently, we have no authority to suppose that they are excluded from the mercies of God, provided they live according to the light afforded by the former revelation; and probably they will first experience the blessings attendant upon their restoration to their own land. Mr. Hall replied, "Very true, sir;" and, after defending the views he had taken of the subject, said, "You are going into the town this morning; you can call at Mr. Combe's, the bookseller, and ask him if he has any of that number." I did so; he, however, knew nothing of the article, nor of the magazine. I then called upon several other booksellers, none of whom were acquainted with the publication. On my return I mentioned the circumstance to Mr. Hall. "Why, sir," said he, "is not that marvellous? Mr. Combe being my printer and bookseller, you would have supposed that the publisher would have sent him some copies; he would have sold a considerable number of them. Why, sir, I should have made a better tradesman than that! Poor Philalethes! so nobody in Leicester knows anything of him; he is unknown in his own country, and among his own kinsfolk!"

In the course of conversation, I renewed the subject of expositions, which he told me had been given up, owing to the unconquerable aversion of his people to the plan. I then inquired whether he had prepared any thing for the press since I saw him. He said, "No, sir; the manual labour is too great, owing to the frequent pain in my back." Those persons who have read the remarks of Dr. Gregory,

appended to the first volume of Mr. Hall's collected works, will sympathize with this observation. I once saw Mr. Hall write a note of invitation to a friend, while reclining at full length on the carpet, with the paper and ink upon it. In addition to this obstacle in the way of his literary labours, Mr. Hall fixed his standard of eloquence so high that he could never please himself. I have every reason to believe that he considered his sermon on the death of the Princess Charlotte as his *chef d'œuvre*. He told me that he had printed sixteen editions, each of which amounted to one thousand copies, and that he did not like to lessen his reputation as an author.

When speaking in glowing terms of Mr. (now Lord) Brougham's inaugural address, on his being installed as Lord-rector of the University of Glasgow, he said, "Brougham is quite right, sir; preparation is every thing.* If I were asked what is the chief requisite for eloquence? I should reply, *Preparation;* and what the second? *Preparation;* and what the third? *Preparation.*" Then (with a sigh), "If I had prepared more for the pulpit, I should have been a much better preacher; there are, sir, heights and depths, and breadths and lengths in eloquence yet to be attained that we know nothing about."

Mr. Hall had learned, from painful experience, what it was to soar, free from the encumbrances and depressing influences of flesh and blood; after his first confinement, he observed that he had been "all mind, and his imagination had, consequently, been overstretched." I have reason, therefore, to believe that his recollection of this period, and a consciousness of his mental capability, constituted the true secret of his aversion to publish. His standard was too high—he *thought* unutterable things.

I asked Mr. Hall what reason could be assigned why so few ministers rose above mediocrity, while they enjoyed the advantages of education, and leisure for pursuing their studies. "I will tell you, sir," said Mr. Hall. "Some of our young men, when they enter the academy, have almost every thing to learn; their time is, therefore, chiefly occupied in acquiring the knowledge of the languages and theology. When they leave the institution, they forget that they are only furnished with the materials for acquiring knowledge, and rest satisfied with present attainments, instead of pursuing their studies, and reading constantly and closely. In addition to this, sir, they settle too soon over congregations; and many of them marry early. Thus

* The following is the passage alluded to by Mr. Hall: "I should lay it down as a rule admitting of no exception, that a man will speak well in proportion as he has written much; and that, with equal talents, he will be the finest extempore speaker, when no time for preparing is allowed, who has prepared himself the most sedulously, when he had an opportunity of delivering a premeditated speech. All the exceptions which I have ever heard cited to this principle are apparent ones only, proving nothing more than that some few men of rare genius have become great speakers without preparation, in no wise showing that, with preparation, they would not have reached a much higher pitch of excellence. The admitted superiority of the ancients in all oratorical accomplishments is the best proof of my position; for their careful preparation is undeniable; nay, in Demosthenes (of whom Quintilian says, that his style indicates more preparation, *plus curæ*, than Cicero's), we can trace, by the recurrence of the same passage, with progressive improvements in different speeches, how nicely he polished the more exquisite parts of his compositions. I could point out favourite passages, occurring as often as three several times, with variations and manifest amendment." It is with pleasure we refer the reader to that masterly discourse, which is another proof of the gigantic powers of its extraordinary author. It is remarkable that this pamphlet, certainly one of the most powerful that has appeared in modern times, was written "during the business of the northern circuit."—GREENE.

they are burdened with the cares of a young family, as well as of the church; and are compelled, from limited incomes, to commence a school for their support. A minister, sir, ought never to be under the necessity of taking scholars."*

To return from this digression: we were sitting alone in the study. I proposed to retire, as Mr. Hall usually secured three hours to himself before dinner. He said, "Do not go yet, sir; it is not often I meet a friend with whom I can converse without restraint. I have many persons call upon me, and I am sometimes quite amused with their conversation; they string their words like beads, sir, and measure their sentences as if their whole reputation depended upon the next syllable they uttered."

Mr. Hall then went to his desk and took out a curiosity: it was an almanac, with a diary, formerly in the possession of the celebrated Philip Henry. I said, "This reminds me, sir, that, many years since, you recommended from the pulpit, at Cambridge, the Life of this good man, with Dr. Bates's dedication; most of us immediately purchased the work." "Well, sir, I dare say you had no reason to regret it." "No, sir," I replied, "it is a fine piece of biography; I have read it several times with increasing pleasure; the writer appears to me, sir, to have been a man possessed of superior intellect to his son Matthew, who was greatly indebted to his father for materials when writing the Commentary." "Yes, sir," said Mr. Hall, "there is no doubt of that; Philip was a man of extraordinary learning. *There were giants in those days*, sir." I inquired whether he had seen Matthew Henry's Treatise on the Sacrament. "Yes, sir, I have it; it is an excellent work; the best that I have met with on the subject, sir." I then expressed my surprise at its being so little known among our Baptist friends, while it was generally read by the Independents. "I cannot account for that, sir," he replied; "the work is by no means controversial."

Speaking of Barrow's Sermons, the style of which is extremely rugged, Mr. Hall observed, "I have read them, sir, and am exceedingly pleased with them; Barrow was a great man. His style is verbose, but the matter excellent." Blair's Sermons were then mentioned. "Blair is not to be compared with Barrow, sir. It is true that his periods are rounder, and, as compositions, his discourses are more elegant; they resemble heaps of polished pebbles, sir. Barrow is, however, the closest thinker; his ideas are profound; they are diamonds stuck in mud, sir."

In the course of a conversation respecting an essay upon a popular subject, by a friend, whose former work he warmly eulogized, Mr. Hall said, "It was with difficulty I read the book, sir; I cannot understand it. * * * * * * appears to have set out on a race after obscurity, and to have overtaken it."

* Mr. Hall's opinion upon this subject cannot obtain too general notice or too serious consideration. It is a lamentable fact, that many excellent ministers have their energies withered by the anxiety of providing the common necessaries of life. Surely it is not too much to expect that the pastor of a church, whose office it is to administer to the spiritual necessities of his flock, should be supplied with *the bread which perisheth*.—GREENE.

After dinner, Mr. Hall appeared agitated and depressed from the anxiety respecting his contemplated removal to Bristol. He commenced the conversation by observing, "I have received an invitation to Bristol, to succeed Dr. Ryland as pastor of Broadmead, and president of the academy. I shall not, however, think of the latter for a moment, sir. A great difficulty will, I am afraid, be created by Terrill's trust, if the two situations are separated." Mrs. Hall, who was sitting by, added, "Now Mr. Greene is with us, I hope you will talk it over, and come to some decision; it is very unpleasant to remain in this state of suspense." I asked Mr. Hall whether he had ever tried Dr. Franklin's moral arithmetic. "No, sir; what do you mean? I have never heard of it." I then explained the plan, which is, first, to state in writing all the reasons *pro* and *con;* then estimate the force of each reason, as some will have the weight of two, three, or four minor ones; number them accordingly; cast up both sides, and strike the balance. "Sir," said Mr. Hall, "I see where the plan is defective; you want a *gauge* to estimate the importance of each reason." He then stated the various motives which influenced him with regard to the two congregations. The following is the copy of a memorandum which was made at the time:

"I. My two sisters and my brother-in-law, Mr. James, reside in Bristol, who are in the decline of life. It would, therefore, be very gratifying, not only to myself, but to them, if I decided upon spending my remaining days where we could occasionally enjoy each other's society.

"II. I should have the advantages of a large public library, containing many valuable books and Italian literature, which I cannot procure at Leicester.

"III. At Bristol, I should not only meet several old friends, but very intelligent society; while at Leicester there are very few reading men with whom I am acquainted.

"IV. Some of my friends contend that my preaching would be of great advantage to the students. I could not, however, take any part in their tuition.

"V. My old and esteemed friend, Isaiah Birt,* and several others, advise me to accept the invitation.

"VI. The change might give a new spring to my energies, and improve the condition of my mind; every thing I say will be new at

* This eminent and venerable minister, the patriarch of our denomination, and the oldest surviving friend of Mr. Hall, who recently visited me, observed, that "No person could know Mr. Hall thoroughly, unless they had seen him in his undress. It was in the social circle that the kindness of his disposition, as well as his eminent piety, were apparent." Mr. Birt has kindly permitted the insertion of the following extract, from a published letter, referring to the decease of his friend, addressed to his son, Rev. J. Birt, of Manchester:

"What a loss! most sensibly do I feel it. Not only did I admire Mr. Hall on account of his superior talents, but I loved him on account of his goodness: the splendour of his genius was seen and admired by every one, but they who were admitted to intimacy with him alone knew the excellency of his heart. They often lost sight of his mighty powers, in admiration of his deep humility, his exalted piety, his childlike simplicity, the ingenuous deference which he paid to others, the tenderness of his compassion, and the extent and warmth of his benevolence. But we shall see him no more. I was invited to bury him, as I did Dr. Ryland; and I most earnestly wished to have performed the service, but I was too ill to attempt it. A little longer, and we shall meet again."—GREENE.

Mr. Birt, whose excellencies of character and usefulness remain to a very considerable degree unknown to the world, died about seven years since.—B.

Bristol, whereas, at Leicester, I have nothing fresh to communicate. After preaching in one place for so long a period, I find great difficulty in fixing upon three new texts every week; and the aversion of the people to expositions renders the difficulty much greater.

"VII. At Bristol I may have the advantage of air and exercise, without the expense and trouble of keeping a horse and gig; although this is a minor consideration, it would certainly improve my health and spirits.

"Now, sir," continued Mr. Hall, "I will give you the other side of the case:

"I. My labours have been very useful at Leicester; I have baptized two hundred and fifty persons since I came here.

"II. The meeting-house has been twice enlarged for me, and the congregation still keeps up in point of numbers.

"III. The church and congregation are unanimous in wishing me to remain, and I know that my removal will occasion great pain to all parties.

"IV. They have offered to increase my salary to — per annum; and also to build a new place, and allow me to commence *de novo*, by forming a new church in accordance with my own views.

"These things, sir, perplex me greatly. Now in what manner would you recommend me to act? What is your opinion? Are not the reasons nicely balanced, without going into Dr. Franklin's algebra?" "I consider there is an awful responsibility, sir," I replied, "in giving an opinion upon the subject of a minister's removal; it is, however, worthy of your consideration, that Mr. Birt and others have no doubts respecting it. I remember reading in Matthew Henry's Life, that, when he was placed in a similar situation, and could not himself discover the path of duty, after much prayer, he determined to be perfectly passive, and to lay the case before several judicious ministers, by whose decision he resolved to be guided." "I have done something similar to that, sir," replied Mr. Hall, "but still I am exceedingly perplexed: the people at Bristol are very anxious, and I expect another deputation from them soon."

A number of minor circumstances, which affected the character of some of his members, greatly influenced Mr. Hall in this decision. The accusers and the friends of the accused very much annoyed him by visiting him at unseasonable hours. One evening, after nine o'clock, on our return from the prayer-meeting, one of those persons called, and kept him from supper until nearly eleven o'clock. On his return to the parlour, he said, "This, sir, is a sample of the interruptions I now meet with: *O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.* I wish I had an invitation to some village, sir, where I could live retired. Is it not very strange, sir, that I never was so fortunate as to have an invitation to a village?" I told him it was not likely that he ever would. He knew what I meant, and laughed heartily.

The following characteristic circumstance occurred about this time. At a prayer-meeting, which was held on a Monday evening, Mr. Hall

was informed of the death of one of his old members. For some time he appeared very thoughtful, and at length said, "I should like, if you have no objection, sir, to call on this poor widow, who lost her husband last night; he was the person for whom I prayed yesterday. It will not be much out of our road, sir, and she will think it kind, especially in her present distressing situation. She lives in an humble way, as you will see, sir. Her husband was what we call at Leicester a *stockinger*." We accordingly visited the poor woman. Mr. Hall commenced, in the most feeling manner, to administer the balm of consolation. He stated his conviction of the piety of the deceased, with whom he had been acquainted for many years, during which time his walk and conversation were consistent with his Christian profession. "It is, indeed, a great loss," addressing himself to the widow, who was deeply affected by this good man's affectionate address; "but your loss is his unspeakable gain: he is now inheriting the promises." Then turning to the children who were grown up, he said, "I hope you will tread in the footsteps of your pious father. You had an excellent parent; strive to follow his bright example," &c. "Now, if you please, as I cannot stay longer to-night, we will spend a few minutes in prayer." Then, without regarding the brick floor, he kneeled down, and prayed for about ten minutes most fervently and devoutly for the widow and fatherless children; after which he shook hands with all of them, wished them a good-night, and promised to visit them again shortly.

Mr. Hall proposed my driving him, the next day, to Charley Forest and Park, to see the ruins of the house in which Lady Jane Grey lived. We set off the following morning, which was the 1st of September. He made his calculation as to time, and told Mrs. Hall that we should return to dinner by three o'clock. As soon as he was seated in the gig, with his pipe, he said, "Stop a few minutes, sir, we shall want a book." He accordingly left the gig, and, after procuring Cowper's Letters, took a large dose of laudanum, from a fear of pain in his back. He was to-day in high spirits, and talked incessantly. When passing the bridge on the entrance to Leicester, Mr. Hall said, "There is a fine meadow, and there is the abbey, and there is the gate. There, sir, is the entrance to the castle; that is the very gate through which Cardinal Wolsey passed, in great distress, as a prisoner. Only look, sir; we may imagine that we hear him exclaim, 'Had I served my God as I have served my king, he would not have forsaken me in my old age:' and there he died, sir."

Mr. Hall stopped to light his pipe at the house of one of his members. On his return to the gig, he resumed the subject of his removal to Bristol, which was uppermost in his mind, and continued it until we arrived at the village public-house at Newtown, where we left the horse and chaise. After engaging a guide, we began to ascend the hill, which was very steep. Mr. Hall held his pipe in one hand and his hat in the other, and frequently turned round to point out the extensive and beautiful prospect which opened before us. As soon as we had reached the summit of the hill, we sat down on a broken

piece of rock. The air was very bracing, and Mr. Hall was in ecstasy. "How fine is this scene, sir! There, sir, is a wonderful prospect! In a fine clear day, from this spot you may see seventeen counties, and objects at the distance of seventeen miles. Yonder, sir, is Leicester; we can just discern the houses. What a contrast between this and Leicester! How still we are, sir! What a divine stillness! We may imagine ourselves the only beings in the universe; yet how many millions are living in the distance! Only think, sir; with all their pursuits, their anxieties, their hopes, their fears, their pleasures, and their sorrows! Yet how still we are, sir: not a sound to be heard. We are above them. We cannot see one of them; but the eye of the Deity sees them all!" His imagination now became exceedingly brilliant, and he appeared in all the glory of his powerful intellect, which it is impossible to reflect. It reminded me of the scene on Mount Tabor. "Think of Leicester, sir," he continued; "there all is bustle and anxiety: some are in the streets, some in shops and counting-houses, and others in their looms, full of care and anxiety; yet how easy we are, sir!" After a momentary pause, we imagined that we heard voices in the distance. "Perhaps it is an echo, sir," said Mr. Hall: "I have heard that there is one in this neighbourhood, and probably this is the spot." He then called out very loudly, and the echo responded from a distant part of the forest.

When we had rested, Mr. Hall requested the guide to show us the nearest way to the house and park. The ground on the side of the hill being very slippery, from the loose stones and dry weather, I offered my arm to Mr. Hall, which he declined, saying, "Oh no, sir; what! do you take me for an old man, sir? do you think that I cannot walk alone, sir? you should understand human nature better than that, sir; if a man *is* getting into years, he never likes to be reminded of it."

On reaching the park, we had a view of the ruins of the house. Mr. Hall observed, "What a set of barbarians they must have been, sir, to destroy such a magnificent house as this was; they were worse than Goths and Vandals! What a size it must have been, sir! I am told they carried away sufficient bricks to build a whole street in Leicester: only think, sir, to build a whole street. We are now on classic ground. Here Lady Jane Grey studied Plato, the divine Plato: what a beautiful spot it must have been to have studied Plato in!" Then approaching the house and surveying it, he exclaimed, "Oh that we did but know the room which she occupied! Only think, sir; a poor hapless young lady of eighteen, taken reluctantly from such retirement and studies, to be crowned. There was no ambition on her part; it was all Northumberland's doing." Then, with great rapidity, he ran over the events of her short life, from the intrigue of Northumberland, to the cruelty of Mary in shedding the blood of her innocent victim. After exploring the ruins, we visited the fishponds, and went from thence into the valley, where there was a fine purling stream that fed the ponds. "Only listen, sir," he said,

"to those beautiful notes produced by this water rippling over the pebbles; it is like music. Hark! one, two, three; why, sir, you may trace all the notes of the gamut!"

At a short distance from this brook, having a full view of the rocks, we sat down leisurely to notice the broken fragments. The line of rocks on one side of the valley exhibited a variety of fantastical shapes, like a heap of rough-hewn quarries, half prepared for the builder. "Here, sir," said Mr. Hall, "is a temple of nature, where the fancy and imagination may revel for days. Come, sir, let us feast our eyes; this is a scene to dwell upon. Let us view it leisurely; let it fill our minds, so that we may carry it away with us. Why, sir, if these woods were within two or three miles of Leicester, I should walk here every day;" then, looking round and musing upon the scenery, he again exclaimed, "What a delightful place to study Plato in! Only conceive, sir; a little more than four such lives as mine, and Lady Jane was walking here, with Plato in her hand, and Roger Ascham by her side. How short the time appears!" On observing the guide at a distance, he said, "How well the man behaves, sir; he does not offer to come near to interrupt or to hurry us. I dare say the poor man wonders what there can be here to interest us so much: he has been over the grounds so often, that the beauties of the scene make not the least impression on him." After musing here for some time, we went to the grove, the trees of which form a long avenue. The branches were of immense size, and shoot out to the distance of seventy feet across the path, through the line of trees on the opposite side, forming a kind of arched roof, and so intermingled that the scene resembled a temple in darkness. On our entering the avenue, the sun, which had been clouded for some time, suddenly burst forth. "There, sir," said Mr. Hall, "how grand is that light and shade; how beautifully they are blended! It appears as if the sun was lighting up the scene for the coming of the Lord of the temple." We walked from one end of the grove to the other, and plucked a branch from one of the large beech-trees, which we took home as a curiosity. This brought us to the village churchyard. I looked at my watch, and found, to my astonishment, that it was past three o'clock, the hour fixed for dinner, and we had yet eight miles to travel. Mr. Hall said, "You quite surprise me, sir; we have been so interested as to lose all ideas of time. Well, never mind, sir; we will just look at this pretty churchyard: how rural it is, sir." Then, fixing his eyes upon one of the graves, he paused for a moment, and with his hat in one hand, and the pipe, which had been long exhausted, in the other, he placed himself in a devotional attitude, and exclaimed,

> "Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
> Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
> Hands that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
> Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre."

On leaving the churchyard we returned to the carriage-road, and, having a mile to walk for the gig, to save Mr. Hall unnecessary exertion, I proposed that he should wait till I fetched it. "That, sir,

is the very thing, and I will meanwhile go into one of these cottages and light my pipe; I can do you no good, sir, as I have no money in my pocket." On my return he related the following adventure: "There was a curious old man in the cottage where I lighted my pipe, who knew me very well; so we entered into conversation on some of the high points. He was formerly one of Mr. Vaughan's hearers, and went to Leicester every Sunday for the purpose of attending his church; but has lately left Mr. Vaughan's ministry, on account of his sentiments. If what he says be correct, Mr. V. is a rank Antinomian. The old man now attends the village church, and appears better satisfied. He told me that he remembered hearing my father at Arnsby. My father, sir, was very doctrinal in his preaching, and more attached to Calvinism than I am. If there are any sentiments to which I could subscribe, they are Baxter's." This led to some remarks upon Dr. Watts's Sermons, of which Mr. Hall very much approved, particularly that which treats on the hidden life of a Christian. He also spoke highly of the hymns which are appended to those sermons, and remarked that it was extraordinary that they were not printed with his collection till of late years. As we rode along, he repeated a hymn, with which he was greatly pleased, beginning,

"How vast the treasure we possess!
How rich thy bounty, King of grace!
This world is ours, and worlds to come;
Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home."

This brought us to Leicester. On passing the bridge, Mr. Hall, having broken his pipe, rose in the gig and tossed it over the wall into the river. This he considered a feat. He then complained of thirst, and requested me to pull up at a friend's house, and beg the favour of a glass of cold water. Perceiving that he was heated, I begged him to refrain; however, he was determined. "There, sir, I was very thirsty, and have taken two large goblets of water." We reached home between five and six in the evening. After dinner, we were joined by Mr. Combe, of Leicester. Mr. Hall gave him a pressing invitation to meet us at tea on the following evening. Little did I imagine that a day which had passed so delightfully would be followed by an event the most painful and distressing. While enjoying the full flow of social intercourse, my beloved partner fell senseless on the floor of the drawing-room. Mr. Hall immediately ran out for medical assistance; but all was in vain. Though she partially recovered, so as to be removed to our own residence, she lingered but for a short time, and then *fell asleep in Jesus*. I shall not trouble the reader with a recital of private sorrow. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.* Immediately upon hearing of her decease, Mr. Hall sent to me the following letter:

"November 5, 1825.

"MY VERY DEAR SIR,

"I am extremely concerned and affected by the melancholy intelligence Mr. Edward Smith was so kind as to convey. Mrs. Hall has

been very seriously indisposed in consequence of it, and it has scarcely for a moment been out of my mind since I heard of it. It gave us the greater shock, because we had heard a more favourable account of dear Mrs. Greene, and were flattering ourselves with the hope that she had entirely surmounted the effects of the indisposition she had while at Leicester. It came like a thunderbolt. Alas! how hidden and mysterious are the ways of Providence; how little did we suppose, when she took her leave of us with so much cheerfulness, her end was so near, and that we were destined never to see her face more! How awfully affecting would our interview have been if we had been able to foresee such an event! Surely it is wise and merciful in the great Disposer of events to hide futurity from our view; without which, the present world would be so imbittered as to become intolerable. My dear friend, what shall I say—what topic of consolation can I touch upon with which you are not as well acquainted as myself? In truth, I have little confidence in the power of words on such occasions: I believe nature must have its course on such occasions, and that elaborate attempts to console only serve to irritate the grief they are intended to assuage. The mitigation and cure of such wounds (if they admit of any) must be the result of the combined operation of religion and of time, which I humbly hope will temper the anguish of your feelings, until they subside within the limits of a not unpleasing melancholy.

There is one consideration, however, that I cannot help suggesting; and that is, that your loss is her unspeakable gain. Of the sincerity of her piety, none that knew her could entertain a doubt; her character was not equivocal, but marked with the strongest indications of a renewed nature; and we well know what is the portion which awaits such. She has entered into the joy of her Lord, and, could she address us from her elevated seat, it would be in the language of our blessed Lord, *Weep not for me, but for yourselves.* The time is short, the end of all things is at hand: but a few more months or years roll over us, and we also shall go hence, and be no more seen.

"I have only heard in general of her removal, with few or no particulars. We long to hear more of the leading circumstances attending this affecting catastrophe; by what it was preceded.

"When your spirits are sufficiently fortified to be able to write on this melancholy subject, we shall be much obliged to you if you will indulge us with an answer to these inquiries, and give us as full and circumstantial an account of the melancholy event as you can bring to your mind. We most deeply and tenderly sympathize with you; and my prayers will never be wanting at a throne of grace, that you may be supported under, and eminently sanctified by, this most afflictive event.

"Mrs. Hall unites with me in most sympathizing regards. We shall be most happy to see you at Leicester.

"I remain, my dear sir, with the greatest sympathy,

"Your affectionate friend and brother,

"Robert Hall."

Shortly after receiving the following letter I visited Mr. Hall at Bristol:

"Leicester, 20th March, 1826.

"My dear Sir,

"I am very sorry you should impute my not replying *earlier* to your letter to any feeling of resentment on account of your long silence on the receipt of my letter of condolence. That I did not hear from you I was surprised, I confess, but not displeased; but when I learned the state of your mind, my surprise entirely ceased, and gave way to unmingled emotions of commiseration and concern.

"The reason of my not answering sooner arose, partly from my despair of writing any thing that could afford any immediate mitigation of sorrow so intense and deep rooted, and partly from the hurry and agitation in which I have long been kept by the prospect of my approaching removal from Leicester. Indeed, I have felt an extraordinary degree of perplexity and anxiety, which is far from having entirely subsided. Had I been aware you attached any importance to my communication, my friendship for you is too ardent and sincere to have permitted me to remain silent.

"Acquainted, as you are, so thoroughly with all the topics of religious consolation, I despair of suggesting a single thought which has not occurred to your own mind. You well know, my dear friend, that the condition of all earthly unions is a necessity of the one bidding a long adieu to the other; that your connexion with the dear deceased was, necessarily, a mortal one; and that, consequently, *no temptation has befallen you but what is common to men.* Severe as your privation is, it is accompanied with the consoling consideration that you are not called to sorrow as those who have no hope; and that she whom you loved as your own soul is in possession of consummate felicity. *If you loved me*, said our Lord to his disciples, *ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to my Father.* May not a similar reflection be applied to your present melancholy loss? What is the genuine dictate of love, but to desire the happiness of its object? In the present instance, that desire is completed; and when could your beloved partner have been removed when you would have regretted her removal less, so that a degree of suffering, equivalent to what you now experience, was inevitable, unless it had pleased God to call you away first, or to terminate your earthly career together, a rare and almost unexampled felicity! The Lord, however, has done what seemeth him good; and though he has deprived you of the delight of your eyes with a stroke, he has left you the promises of God, the consolations of hope, and the benefit yet to be derived from her fervent prayers and her bright example. Let me earnestly urge you to try the effect of change of scene. What if you were to reside for a time at Bristol? I need not say how much your society would delight me. In Bristol, or the vicinity, you would meet with much to occupy and amuse you.

"I am, my very dear friend,

"Your affectionate and sympathizing brother,

"Robert Hall.

"Mrs. Hall is at Bristol, or would join me in most affectionate regards. I shall rejoice to hear from you. My best regards to Dr. Gregory and family."

Mr. Hall had taken a newly-built house, pleasantly situated in Ashley Place, on the Stapleton road, about a mile from the meeting-house at Broadmead; but as it was not finished, Mrs. Hall and himself were residing with his brother-in-law, Mr. James, in Deighton-street.

Our first interview produced a melancholy satisfaction. The late painful bereavement naturally occupied much of the conversation. One circumstance I shall be pardoned for introducing to the reader: I observed to Mr. Hall, that, when his departed friend was in full prospect of the great change which awaited her, she lamented that she had not conversed more upon religious subjects; and observed, with regret, that even ministers too much confined the great subjects of religion to the closet and to the pulpit. I said, "How is this, Mr. Hall? we have often felt disappointed, after being in company with eminent ministers, to find that almost any subject has been started and pursued rather than religion." "I confess, sir," he replied, "I cannot tell how it is; I must plead guilty to the charge, for, somehow or other, I have no aptitude for religious conversation in general company; it requires a peculiar tact, sir, which I find very difficult to attain, except when visiting a person in affliction or on a sick-bed: much, sir, may be attributed to early associations and habits. We Dissenters have gone to the extreme, from fear of being charged with cant and enthusiasm, and of being considered puritanical."

I was very much concerned to find such a striking alteration in Mr. Hall's health and activity in the space of only six months; he did not appear like the same man, and complained of a difficulty in breathing, and of pain in his chest. He could not walk more than a quarter of a mile without stopping in the streets to rest himself against some pales, to recover his breath; whereas, in the previous September, he had walked seven or eight miles. He said, "Sir, this is quite a new complaint; I never had this till I became so anxious about leaving Leicester. I have been very much perplexed, sir, fearing that I have not been in the path of duty in removing; you cannot conceive of the conflict which I have had, sir. The parting was very painful, but I acted for the best, and have only engaged myself here for twelve months, so that if I do not find myself happy, I dare say the friends at Leicester will be glad to have me back. There are some things that I want to talk to you about; they do not relate to the church, but to the congregation; and it wil be a mortifying thing, sir, if I am to be uncomfortable in a similar way as at Leicester; if that should be the case, I am determined to leave."

As Mr. Hall appeared anxious to be again settled in his study, a few of the students from the college, and Mr. Anderson, at my request, kindly assisted in unpacking and arranging his books. When this was completed, I informed Mr. Hall, who appeared much surprised and delighted. "It was very kind, sir; it would have cost a great

deal of money if I had employed a bookseller. I ought to give the students a *housewarming*, don't you think so, sir?"

He inquired my opinion of the Baptist Academy in Stokes Croft. I told him that I had frequently taken it for a bridewell, and was surprised when informed that it was the Baptist Academy. "Well you might be, sir; it is neither one thing nor the other; there is no order of architecture to which it belongs." I observed that it was planned by an acquaintance of Mr. Hall, and that it was the result of *his* information. "Who? me, sir?" he replied; "*my* information, sir? I had nothing to do with it, sir." I then reminded him of a visit he made to some of the principal buildings in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, in company with the architect; and added, that Mr. A—— declared that he had derived more valuable information from the conversation of that day than he had ever obtained from any member of the profession. This being the case, we may conclude, sir, that Bristol Academy was the result of that "valuable information." Mr. Hall laughed heartily, and observed, "The architect, sir, has quite mistaken the design for which the place was erected: the error, however, may be attributed to the nature of his employment; about that time he was engaged in building several of our county jails."

Shortly after this, he observed, "What a very amiable set of students they have in the academy, sir. You have heard some of them at conference; they are very modest and unassuming young men, sir, and behave with remarkable propriety.* Mr. Crisp† speaks very highly of them, sir; I very much wish that *the families would take more notice of them, by inviting them to their houses;* they behave much better, sir, than we did; when I was at the academy, some of us were very unruly, sir; we plagued Dr. Evans sadly. I think they are worked too hard, sir; they should be allowed more time for general literature, not only with a view to information, but to enliven their minds." In this opinion I coincided, and instanced the Polytechnic School at Paris, where the studies are varied daily. "An admirable plan, sir," replied Mr. Hall: "it preserves the mind from being jaded; such transitions enable the student to apply with renewed vigour."

* There was, probably, no feature in the character of Mr. Hall more striking than his kindness to young ministers, where he thought he saw the indications of their possessing the true spirit of their office. I well remember his affectionate manner on my first introduction to him by the late Rev. John Mack, of Clipstone, to whom a reference has been made on a preceding page.

As we walked round Mr. Mack's garden, after he had asked a variety of questions, showing the kind interest he felt in my welfare, he at length said, "Well, sir, you shall come to Leicester and spend a few days with me. I should like to talk several matters over with you." Of course, I manifested no disposition to decline the invitation, and he proceeded, "Well, sir, let us fix the time; you shall come on the Saturday, and we will divide the labours of the Sabbath." The reader will not feel surprised that, young and inexperienced as I was, and conscious of his distinguished eminence, I unhesitatingly refused to preach; and in reply to his arguments, told him that I really could not occupy his pulpit, and preach to his people, especially in his presence; he at last became warm, and said, "Very well, sir, I will say no more about it. I have entirely misunderstood your character, for I really thought, sir, that you possessed somewhat of the modesty and diffidence which young ministers ought to manifest; and as I am many years older than you, I thought you would allow me to judge whether or not you were fit to preach in my pulpit." We shortly after again met, and he readily forgave me, on condition that I would introduce the service for him on the occasion which had brought us together —B.

† There were few persons for whom Mr. Hall entertained so great an affection as for the Rev. T. S. Crisp. This pious, talented, and truly amiable man holds the office of president of the Baptist Academy, Bristol, and afternoon lecturer at Broadmead. The name of Mr. Crisp is never mentioned by the students but with veneration and esteem.—GREENE.

We were sitting with the window open, and his attention was taken with a field of ripe grass, while he was smoking his pipe. "What beautiful undulations!" he exclaimed; "they are like ocean waves! How pleasing, sir! The poets have almost exhausted nature for images; but I do not recollect at this moment that any of them have ever noticed this beautiful appearance; the ripe corn, you know, sir, is frequently employed."

Shortly after this, Mr. Hall joined a party on a visit to Lord Clifford's Park and King's Weston. We reached Pen-pole Point about seven P.M. It was a fine evening about the latter end of May; the sun was setting in the waters of the Severn, in all its majesty and glory. Mr. Hall was in raptures: "Only look, sir, on that mild silvery light shed upon the expanse of waters; how inviting! Why, sir, it looks as if they were preparing for a magnificent public baptism; and that the one hundred and forty-four thousand described in the Revelation were about to descend into the waves, sir! What a sublime scene it is!" We remained at the inn at King's Weston till nearly eleven o'clock, and then returned.

The objection of the Baptists at Broadmead to "mixed communion" imposed double duty on Mr. Hall on those days when the Lord's Supper was administered. He was highly delighted when informed that his church at Leicester had thrown down the middle wall of partition contained in ordinances. "Mr. Mursell, sir," said he, "is a much cleverer man than I am; he has accomplished that which I could not effect, sir. I hope, sir, they will have an anniversary to celebrate my removal from Leicester, and I will certainly attend."

Reference having been made to the "conference," it may be observed, for the information of the reader, that the term is applied to a meeting that is usually held on Tuesday evenings, in the vestry at Broadmead, in Bristol, when two of the students deliver, in rotation, short discourses upon a given subject. After them, the pastor of Broadmead, or one of the tutors, concludes the service by prayer and a few additional observations.

At one of the conference meetings, Mr. Hall, as was usual on such occasions, announced the subject which had been proposed for the discussion of the following week; it was from 1 Chron., xi., 17: "*And David longed and said, O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate.*" After reading the passage, Mr. Hall turned to Mr. Crisp, and said, "I am sorry, sir, I have announced that passage; what a strange subject, sir! I am sure neither the students nor myself will be able to make any thing of it." Mr. Crisp was of opinion that it had better be changed. The following evening I called upon this gentleman, and proposed another text; of which he approved, and requested me to inform Mr. Hall of the alteration. I did so; and was surprised to find that he had changed his mind respecting it. "Oh no, sir," said he, "we will have yours another week; I have been thinking of the other, and like it very much; it is full of instruction—there is a great deal may be said upon it. Tell Mr. Crisp I mean to retain it, and the students must do their best."

Accordingly, two of the young men spoke upon the passage: their remarks were very ingenious, but they treated it figuratively, and spiritualized the subject. Mr. Hall followed for about a quarter of an hour, in a most interesting and instructive manner, taking the text, in its connexion, as illustrative of the character of David. The following is an outline: "David was a mighty man of war from his youth; he was chosen by God to govern the kingdom of Israel after the rejection of Saul. He was a man of astonishing courage. When brought before Saul, after relating, in a simple and artless manner, one of his achievements, he fearlessly assured him that *the uncircumcised Philistine should be as one of them, seeing he had defied the armies of the living God.* David succeeded in this enterprise; and, with a stone and a sling, slew the giant Goliath. It is not at all surprising that, when a man of such extraordinary courage and daring fled the country, on account of the cruel jealousy of Saul, a number of men, distinguished for their bravery, should attach themselves to him, and resolve to follow his fortunes.

"It appears, from the whole of David's history, that he was not only the greatest captain of the age, but that he had that peculiar faculty, which some few eminent generals have possessed, of attaching the hearts of his followers to himself; a proof of which we have in the extraordinary affection entertained for him by Jonathan, as, notwithstanding the considerations which tended to counteract this feeling, *their souls were knit together* as brethren. Let it be remembered that David was destined to succeed to that throne which Jonathan, by birth, was entitled to fill. David was distinguished by that kindness of disposition which is the grand secret in ruling the hearts of men.

"The occasion on which the words of the text were delivered was this: David was in the hold. The camp of the Philistines was between the well of Bethlehem and this stronghold. David, having undergone great fatigue, was probably overcome with thirst; and remembering the frequent refreshments he had received from this celebrated well, he incautiously, without considering the ardour and devotion of some of the great captains who surrounded him, exclaimed, *O that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!* The wish of such a leader was considered equal to a command. The sacred historian informs us of the names, the characters, and achievements of the three remarkable heroes who undertook the rash enterprise of breaking through the camp of the Philistines, to procure water in order to assuage the thirst of their leader (verses 20 to 25). Then David *poured it out to the Lord, and said, My God forbid it me that I should do this thing. Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it.* Therefore he would not drink.

"This," Mr. Hall observed, "shows the humanity of David; he reflected on himself for having, in a moment of irritation, uttered a sentiment of complaint, for which the lives of his fellow-men, long endeared to him, were so exposed to jeopardy purposely to gratify his

wishes; he was evidently affected by this fresh proof of their devotedness to him.

"We learn, my brethren," continued Mr. Hall, "from this subject, the vast importance of this principle of kindness, not only between the governors and the governed, but in all the relations of social and domestic life; between parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants: it is the grand secret of government, and the source of happiness. If masters, for instance, were more influenced by this principle, and considered the happiness and welfare of their servants, we should find a greater degree of attachment, and readiness to serve and give themselves up to them; it would become a reasonable and useful service: and, on the other hand, if servants were kind, obedient, and attached to the interests and persons of their masters, we should not hear so many complaints of the disobedience of the one, nor of the unreasonable requirements of the other.

"The same will apply to the intercourse of social life. If we made it our study to promote the happiness of our friends, by sympathy, kindness, and generosity, the benefits would be reciprocal, the selfish principle abandoned, and that peace and good-will to men, which was the design of the appearance of Jesus Christ in our world, would very soon be realized in its fullest extent. An apostle classes 'brotherly kindness' among the Christian virtues. 'Add to your faith virtue,' &c., and '*brotherly kindness;* and to brotherly kindness charity. Now abideth faith, hope, charity; these three: but the greatest of these,' he says, 'is charity, or love.'"

One evening, the subject of Dr. Young's "Night Thoughts" being introduced, I quoted the following passage:

> "Eternal life is nature's ardent wish;
> What ardently we wish, we soon believe;
> Thy tardy faith declares that wish destroyed.
> What has destroyed it? Shall I tell thee what?
> When feared the future, 'tis no longer wished;
> And when unwished, we strive to disbelieve:
> Thus infidelity our guilt betrays."

I observed to Mr. Hall that, in the course of my experience in society, I uniformly found the truth of these sentiments; that I never met with an instance where a man took up the argument as an unbeliever in the truth of Christianity, but it might be traced to an irregularity in his moral conduct, thus confirming a frequent remark of his: "When a man is opposed to Christianity, it is because Christianity is opposed to him." I then inquired how it could be accounted for that Dr. Young's "Night Thoughts" are less estimated than formerly. Mr. Hall replied, "Dr. Young is destined to immortality. I cannot account for the taste of the age in preferring a light and trifling kind of literature, which, being all glare, affords no food for the mind. Another age will properly appreciate the genius of Young." A gentleman then introduced Pollok's "Course of Time," and compared it to Milton. Mr. Hall said, "I am surprised at that observation, sir; in my opinion, the sublimity of Pollok is the sublimity of nonsense."

I never knew Mr. Hall's spirits so seriously affected as they were,

for a fortnight or three weeks, about this period. One day, when driving him out, he said, "Sir, my spirits are so horribly depressed, I do not know what to do with myself." His friends were evidently considerably alarmed respecting him.

About ten days after this, I called to inquire respecting his health. "I am but very middling, sir," was his reply. I endeavoured to rally him, by assuring him that he appeared better; that his eyes were re-assuming their wonted brilliancy. "Do you think so, sir?" He knew what I meant, arose and went to the glass, and immediately brightened up: "I think you are right, sir; I am glad you think so; I believe I am better."

He had been copiously bled during this illness; I felt, however, perfectly convinced that he could not live many years; and in this opinion I was joined by the medical gentleman who attended him at the time.

One evening, when walking to the lecture at Broadmead, he found such great difficulty in proceeding, that he frequently rested to regain his breath. At length he said, "I can go no farther, sir;" and then, pointing to a friend's house, he continued, "We will go in here, and give up the idea of the meeting."

Mr. Hall decidedly objected to the application of the term *chapel* to places of worship occupied by the Dissenters, since it had been previously appropriated to buildings connected with the Church of England. He said, "Dissenters need not borrow plumage from the hierarchy: simplicity, sir, is true beauty." For a similar reason, Mr. Hall never wore a gown in the pulpit. He considered that, as it was an honour conferred by the University, no Dissenter who had not taken a degree could with propriety assume the costume of that learned body. "Sir, the Nonconformist ministers continued to wear the gown after their ejectment; but they had an undoubted right to it, having taken degrees at the universities. If Dissenting ministers will robe themselves, let them adopt a costume characteristic of their own seminaries." Every gentleman who has lived in a university town will appreciate the delicacy of this sentiment.

About this time, Mr. Hall was solicited to repeat the Series of Discourses upon Socinianism which he had previously delivered at Leicester. "No, sir," he replied, "I shall not *begin* the controversy; I did not enter upon it at Leicester until the orthodox were attacked by the Socinian minister. Dr. Carpenter is a most amiable, gentlemanly man, and we are upon very good terms. I have, therefore, no wish to break the peace, or to offend him: at the same time, I shall always avow my sentiments whenever the subject comes regularly under notice, and if Dr. Carpenter, or any other talented Unitarian in the city, should throw down the gauntlet, I will be the first to take it up."

Mr. Hall was also strongly urged by a friend to reprint his celebrated pamphlet in answer to the Rev. John Clayton, which first appeared in 1791. In reply, Mr. Hall observed, "No, sir; I shall never consent to the republication of that letter. The pamphlet answered the purpose for which it was intended; it would, therefore, be unkind

and ungentlemanly to wound the feelings either of Mr. Clayton, or of his sons, by reviving the controversy."*

At a period of his illness this summer, Mr. Hall preached a singularly beautiful sermon, full of pathos and tenderness, quite in a feeble tone and plaintive manner, occasioned by great bodily indisposition, from these words: *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom:* or, as he said it should be rendered, A *kingdom.* It was very evident that he himself had derived great consolation from the subject.

One day, after speaking very freely upon the usual method of preaching, Mr. Hall gave it as his opinion, that "ministers are too methodical and mechanical as to time." I then took the liberty of suggesting the importance of more attention being paid to the application of the subject. "You are quite correct, sir," he replied; "the celebrated Mr. Fox was an example of this kind. He generally attempted to put his ideas in different points of view, in order to impress them more fully upon the mind. I intend, in future, to enlarge my applications."

Mr. Hall was very particular never to exceed the appointed time for preaching. "He sometimes," as Mr. Bosworth has observed, "ended abruptly, and sat down just when his hearers wished him to proceed."† On this being mentioned to Mr. Hall, he replied, "Sir, it is much better to leave the hearers with an appetite for more than to satiate and tire them out."

Mr. Hall's strength now evidently declined: frequently on Sabbath evenings he was so much exhausted as to fall asleep on the sofa, immediately after he had reached his own residence. After a short nap, he rose suddenly, dropped his pipe, and called for the Bible: "Come, let us have prayer;" and generally fell asleep before the chapter was finished. His friends provided a car regularly to convey him to and from the meeting. Indeed, at this time he could scarcely make a call without this conveyance. He regretted exceedingly his inability to walk, as it prevented him from making pastoral calls and visiting the sick, which he had been in the habit of doing at Cambridge and at Leicester. He invariably objected to dining from home; his friends, therefore, engaged him to tea, and on such occasions invited parties to meet him, and sent a car to his house by six o'clock, and conveyed him back about ten. He was much pleased with this plan: it was, however, necessary, owing to his numerous engagements, to invite him a fortnight beforehand; and one of his daughters usually kept a list of these invitations. The months of June and July this year were unusually warm; Mr. Hall, however, seldom complained of the heat, and had a fire almost constantly in his study.

One morning I asked him which way he would ride, and, to my great surprise, he mentioned the *Fish Ponds:* adding, "I should like

* See a preceding page of this volume, and note.—B.

† See "A Discourse on the Decease of the Rev. R. Hall, A.M., delivered in the Baptist Chapel, Stoke Newington, by Newton Bosworth;" a pamphlet which contains the most able, accurate, and interesting sketch of the character of Mr. Hall that has hitherto appeared.—GREENE.

to show you the spot." He then expatiated on the manner in which patients are treated in that institution, which he considered superior to any other in the kingdom.

A lapse of three years having occurred since his last periodical visit to Cambridge, Mr. Hall considered that the change might be of service to his health, and wrote to inform his friends of his intention to visit them. He travelled by way of Birmingham and Leicester, and preached a Sabbath at the latter place. In the course of a week I joined him at Cambridge; this was in the autumn of 1826; all our friends were enthusiastically delighted on meeting him once more. The joy, however, was damped by the altered appearance of his person, which indicated a broken frame of body, and produced a general feeling that they should never see him at Cambridge again. But the powers of his mind in preaching were as vigorous as before, and his countenance animated by being surrounded by his old friends. Many of them came from London, as well as from other parts of the country, on purpose to hear him. The meeting-house, with the enlarged vestry, was much too small for the congregation, and great numbers went away: the line of windows in the vestry was thrown open, that he might be heard, if not seen. It was necessary for the families to go an hour before the time of service, in order to secure accommodation.

Our host, E. Foster, Esq., left Mr. Hall under my charge, to bring him in time, while he went forward with his family, as Mr. Hall was perfectly absorbed while preparing for the pulpit. One Sabbath morning it was with great difficulty he reached the chapel, owing to the pain in his back. A gentleman's carriage had been waiting for him nearly half an hour. The time having expired, I went to him a second time. "I do not think I can preach this morning," said he; "at any rate, you must send to Mr. Edmonds, and request him to read the Scriptures, and engage in prayer for me." I did so, and then returned to him. He found a difficulty in dressing himself. He had a new silk waistcoat on, which Mrs. —— had kindly laid for him as a present. On walking through the hall, he observed, "Why, sir, this is quite a new waistcoat; it is very handsome; I think it fits me very well, only perhaps it is too large. I wonder whether Mrs. —— intends that I should keep it, sir; what do you think?" "Oh yes, sir, I know she does." "Well, sir, that is very kind; she is a most amiable woman."

A length we arrived at the meeting-house. Mr. Edmonds was offering prayer. When he had finished, Mr. Hall with great difficulty reached the pulpit, owing to the crowds which thronged the aisles. We dined together at the house of a friend very near to the meeting-house. At three o'clock Mr. Hall retired to his chamber to prepare for the evening service, which commenced at half past six. Between five and six he rang the bell, which was answered by the servant. He said he wanted to speak to Mr. Greene directly. I found him with his pipe. He was taking tea; and his Bible was on the table, without either pen or ink. He appeared greatly agitated. The mo-

ment I entered the room he said, "Oh, Mr. Greene, I am quite in a dilemma! what time is it, sir? It has just occurred to me that the sermon I have been preparing for this evening I have preached before at Cambridge. Pray can you tell me, sir? (naming the text); because, if so, I must change the subject; I cannot preach the same sermon again." "No, sir, you never have in my hearing, I am certain; but perhaps you may have done so when I was not here: I will go and inquire of Mr. James Nutter, sir, and some friends who are at tea below." On finding that he had not, I immediately informed Mr. Hall. "Sir, I am glad of it; this has relieved my mind exceedingly: if I had preached it before, I must even now have taken another subject."

The last Sabbath evening of his visit to Cambridge, the galleries were propped, the place was crowded to excess, and some hundreds returned that could not obtain admission: there was the same tenacity for standing-places in the aisles as is frequently seen at an interesting trial during the assizes. The people would not give way for fear of being dispossessed. At one time, in making the effort, Mr. Hall thought it would be impossible for him to enter the pulpit, but at length he succeeded. I heard him from the vestry, but could not see him. His text was, *Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners;* this was probably one of the most animated and energetic sermons that ever he delivered. Our friends who could see him said, that towards the close he was so much excited, that the pulpit appeared as if it could not contain him.

After the service, when Mr. Hall re-entered the carriage, he said, "Did you ever witness such a scene, sir? In all the places I ever preached, there has never been any thing like this. On reaching the pulpit, it was almost terrific. I could not see the bodies of the people; they appeared all heads, sir, a mass of undistinguishable heads; and all eyes were fixed upon me, sir." "I could not," I said, "see you, sir, but I think I never heard you so animated." "Why, sir, you heard the same sermon before at Bristol. I preached it only a few weeks ago." "The text was the same, sir," I replied, "but the sermon was different." "Different, sir! how was it different?" "You introduced this idea and the other (naming them), which were not in that sermon; then, sir, some parts of the filling up were different; and the application was considerably enlarged." "You are quite right, sir; I remember now. But you cannot think, sir, how delighted I feel that my labours are ended at Cambridge. It is a formidable thing for me to preach here, because I know that much is expected from me; and as some of the professors of the University attend on these occasions, and my old friends identify themselves so much with me, I am very anxious to do my best."

During this visit, Mr. Hall preached also at Royston and Melbourne. I accompanied him in his visit to the latter place. Lord Dacre attended on the occasion. After service, we went to the house of Mr. Fordham, of Melbourne Bury, where Lord Dacre and a large party were waiting to see him. His lordship sat some time on the sofa in

conversation with Mr. Hall, and expressed his astonishment at his mental powers and eloquence.

The visits of Mr. Hall were of the same kind as I have before described: he breakfasted with one family, dined with a second, and supped with another; not forgetting the parting visit which he received from his old and poorer members. He remarked the great change which had taken place in a few years by deaths and removals. "Why, sir, if you remember, it was as much as I could do to go my rounds, and call on my friends *once* in three weeks; now I can visit all of them two or three times over. A fortnight, sir, would be long enough for my stay at Cambridge, if I were only to pay *one* visit to each family." A purse was invariably made by his friends to defray his journeying expenses; and Mrs. Hall told me that he always returned from Cambridge a much richer man than he went; indeed, she believed that if he could eat gold, his friends there would give it to him.

One day, when visiting with a large party, Mr. Hall mentioned a circumstance which he had heard to the disadvantage of one of our mutual friends. I expressed my surprise, and the next morning told him that his remarks of the preceding evening had given me much pain. "Why, sir," said Mr. Hall, "I had it from Mr. ——, a gentleman, you know, sir, of the highest character and respectability, so that there can be no doubt of its truth." I again expressed my dissatisfaction with the statement, and begged, as an act of justice, that he would mention the circumstance to the gentleman. Mr. Hall did so, and admitted that the justification was the most complete and satisfactory, both from oral and documentary evidence, that he had ever heard. Our friend expressed himself much obliged for the opportunity of erasing the erroneous impression from his mind. It is well known to some of Mr. Hall's friends that he was apt to imbibe a prejudice, when any advantage was taken of his openness of disposition and frankness of manner to instil one. I could give proofs, were this doubted; and, in delineating Mr. Hall's private character, I consider that it would not be just to represent him as a perfect man, since none of us will become thoroughly purified until we unite with the spirits of *just men made perfect.*

This brings to my recollection an instance of Mr. Hall's discrimination. The circumstance occurred in Northampton, at a meeting of ministers of the Baptist denomination, who had assembled for the purpose of choosing a successor to the late Rev. Andrew Fuller as secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society. Mr. Hall did not approve of the principle, nor would he concede the right, of Mr. Fuller to nominate his successor. He therefore requested a deputation of friends from Cambridge to represent the wishes of the auxiliary society in that place, and to support his measure. Three were accordingly chosen, and we attended the meeting at Northampton. After the gentleman nominated by the late secretary had been recommended, chiefly on the ground of deference to Mr. Fuller's judgment, Mr. Hall rose, and stated that he did not do so from any personal disrespect to the gentleman named, but because he preferred a person of age and expe-

rience ; and, therefore, notwithstanding much had been said of the value and importance of attending to Mr. Fuller's recommendation, he should oppose the appointment. He then became animated: "There is no man," said Mr. Hall, "who more highly estimated Andrew Fuller's general excellences than myself; but as to knowledge of men and insight into character, Mr. Fuller was lamentably defective, almost supernaturally defective—witness the choice that he had made of some of his intimate friends. I say nothing but what I would have declared in the presence of Mr. Fuller; and if I had a voice that could pierce the clouds, and reach him where he now is, amid the choir of angels, and in the assembly of the just made perfect, I would repeat what I have now said." The result of the meeting was the appointment of the late Rev. Dr. Ryland, of Bristol, and the late Rev. James Hinton, of Oxford.

Mr. Hall left Cambridge for Bristol in September, and travelled by way of London. Some time previous to this, Mr. Hall preached at the Rev. Dr. Cox's meeting-house, Hackney. Among other distinguished individuals who attended on the occasion were Mr., now Lord Brougham, Sir Thomas Denman, M.P., now lord-chief-justice, and Mr. Rogers the poet. Sir Thomas Denman has kindly communicated the following particulars:

"Sir,

"The circumstance to which you allude occurred, I think, in the summer of 1825. Mr. Brougham, the present lord-chancellor, Mr. Rogers, the poet, and myself, went to hear Mr. Hall preach at Dr. Cox's chapel, at Hackney. The text has escaped my memory. The object of the sermon was mainly to show that Christianity did not teach religion to man, that task being already performed by natural reason and by the revelations recorded in the Old Testament; but that it gave religion its mild and benevolent character, disarming it of its terrors, and showing on what terms the Divine mercy may be secured. I well remember that, at one moment when he was peculiarly urgent in his eloquence, Lord Brougham and I turned round to one another, and each made the remark, that his style resembled Lord Plunkett's in a remarkable manner.

"The public will owe you much for a genuine history of so extraordinary a genius. One cannot help lamenting that so many magnificent discourses have perished; yet it is possible that a small collection may obtain more general popularity than a complete one. I have often regretted that I did not more frequently avail myself of the opportunities of hearing him that I enjoyed at Leicester.

"I am, sir,

"Yours very faithfully,

"Thomas Denman.

"Studley Park, April 6, 1831.
"To Mr. John Greene."

Circumstances prevented my visiting him again till April, 1827, having previously received the following letter:

"April 11, 1827.

"My dear Friend,

"I am really ashamed not to have earlier answered your kind communications, but you know my extreme reluctance to letter-writing, and have intended to avail myself of the first opportunity of conveying a few lines. I am very sorry to hear so poor an account of your health and spirits: I am concerned, but not surprised to hear of this, as London never appeared to me the proper sphere for you. There is too much excitement and bustle for you; nor, I fear, will you be equal for some time to the anxieties and agitations of business.

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"I wish, my dear sir, you had returned to Bristol. Your circle of society there would have been sufficient, without being too large; and while there are so many societies and benevolent institutions as are found here, any gentleman may find ample employment by lending his assistance on committees, &c. Mr. R., who has no sort of engagement in business, makes himself one of the most useful men in Bristol, by taking a lead in the organization and management of public institutions. I hope you will make up your mind to return to us, and, in all probability, you will meet with something suitable in the way of business. I have little news to communicate. Few changes have taken place since you were here. The quarrel between * * * * * * ceases to be talked of.

"Our congregation continues very good, rather increasing than otherwise; and the kindness of the people continues undiminished. I wish I could see more indications of usefulness, yet have reason to hope I do not labour in vain. My health is also, through mercy, very good; the recent complaint in my breast is not removed, but I think it is somewhat abated. The health of Mrs. Hall, who unites with me in kindest regards, is as good as usual. It will give us great pleasure to see you here. Wishing you an increase of every blessing, I remain,

"My dear sir,

"Yours affectionately,

"Robert Hall."

On the receipt of the above letter I went to Bristol, in order to consult Mr. Hall upon several subjects of importance.

No man possessed a sounder judgment upon every subject; and he who made Mr. Hall his friend might always calculate upon receiving the most prudent and judicious advice. Sometimes the principles and practice of those who questioned Mr. Hall's judgment have been opposed to his opinion of right. The following is a case in point. Mr. Hall wrote and printed, in 1824, a pamphlet against the cruelty and injustice of slavery, as being contrary to nature, to reason, and to Christianity. A West Indian proprietor of slaves consequently arraigned Mr. Hall as a wild enthusiast. The reason was sufficiently obvious: Mr. Hall gave it as his opinion that "slavery introduces the most horrible confusion, since it degrades human beings from the denomination of persons to that of things; and by merging the interests of the slave in those of the master, he becomes a mere appen-

dage to the existence of another, instead of preserving the dignity which belongs to a reasonable and accountable nature. * * * * * * * It would be difficult to find a parallel to it in any age or nation, with the exception of those unhappy persons who are carried captive by the piratical states of Barbary. Scourged, branded, and sold, at the discretion of their masters, the slaves in our West India islands are doomed to a life of incessant toil." One extract more shall suffice; it is with pleasure that I refer the reader to this masterly and eloquent pamphlet: "It is no small aggravation of the cruelty of this system, that its unhappy victims have not been exposed to it as the punishment of Crime; but by the violence of ruffians, who, having traversed the ocean in quest of human prey, forcibly tore them from their native shores, and the embraces of their dearest relations, in order to expose them to sale in a distant quarter of the globe. The forms of judicial inquiry, the examination of witnesses, the proof of guilt, and the sentence of a judge, were not the precursors of this most dire calamity; it was the assault of brutal violence on helpless weakness and unsuspecting innocence; it was the grasp of the marauder and the assassin hurrying away his victims, amid shrieks of horror and the piercing accents of despair, which prepared these scenes of wo. These, and the descendants of these, are the persons who compose the black population of our slave colonies. * * * * * We behold these children of nature, for the purpose chiefly of supplying us with the ingredient which sweetens our repasts, compelled by men, who call themselves Christians, to exhaust to its dregs a more bitter cup than is usually allotted to the greatest adepts in crime."

After staying a Sabbath in Bristol, I returned to London, having engaged to visit Mr. Hall again shortly. In the September following, I found his health impaired by his sufferings, and nothing but large doses of laudanum freed him from pain, and enabled him to preach and to go into company. He appeared quite reconciled to Bristol. Instead of taking the laudanum with a gauge, he now had it made into opium pills.

During one evening which he spent with me, being in the greatest agony for a quarter of an hour, he laid his hands on the table, and frequently cried out from the violence of the pain in his back. After taking some additional pills from his box, he said, "There, sir, that quantity is equal to 250 drops of laudanum, and makes up 1500 drops which I have taken to-day." As the dose did not produce immediate relief, he resolved to take 250 additional drops. I expostulated, and recommended him to wait for some warm tea, that it might have time to be diffused through the system. He did so, and was remarkably cheerful the remainder of the evening. We were now joined by a medical friend. Mr. Hall immediately commenced a conversation with him, by remarking, "What a merciful provision laudanum is, sir! I could not exist without it. It seems as if Providence had designed it as a specific for me. Most persons complain that it affects the head, and stupifies them; it has, however, a contrary influence upon me; I always feel more lively after taking it. How do you ac-

count for this, sir?" The gentleman confessed his inability to account for it, and stated that Mr. Hall's was a solitary instance.

There was at this time a young gentleman at Bristol possessed of very considerable talents, who was destined for the Church. His parents were Dissenters. Being very desirous of an interview with Mr. Hall, for the purpose of obtaining his recommendation of suitable books, I mentioned the circumstance to Mr. Hall. "No, sir," he replied, "I shall not do any such thing. His tutor is the proper person to recommend the best books; I have met with the same thing before, sir, and have had my name bandied about everywhere with the books I have recommended. Besides this, sir, it would be very inconsistent in me, as a Dissenter, to be accessary to his going into the Church,* especially as his parents are Dissenters. You say he has seriously studied the question of dissent: I can make every allowance, sir, for a conscientious young man who has been educated a churchman; but I cannot conceive it possible for any youth, having been brought up as a Dissenter, seriously to decide in favour of the Church, without having some sinister views. The argument upon this subject is very clear, and lies in a very narrow compass. Jesus Christ is the sole lawgiver in his Church. He said, *My kingdom is not of this world.* It was to be distinct and separate; whoever, then, attempts to connect His kingdom or Church with the State, or with the honours, the dignities, and emoluments of this world, whatever may be the pretence, makes it a worldly sanctuary, and disobeys the will of the lawgiver." Mr. Hall had this temptation presented to him in the meridian of life, and nobly made the sacrifice. He is now receiving the reward of his fidelity. He has heard the blessed sentence, *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* It is nearly thirty years since he exclaimed, "Who, my friends, would not labour with all his might to become the friend of God? to aspire after eternal honours, that he may receive a divine reward, and carry the trophies of victory into the presence of his God?" *He rests from his labours, and his works do follow him.*

I made another effort to prevail upon him to print some sermons, especially as Mrs. Hall warmly seconded the request. He had been urged to print a discourse recently delivered, while it was fresh in his mind. I offered to wait upon him one hour every morning, to take it down at his leisure in short-hand, and return to him daily a deciphered copy for his correction. To this he replied, "No, sir; I never could dictate to an amanuensis." "But, sir," I observed, "you can sit on the sofa and smoke your pipe; and if I sit behind, you will have nothing to do but speak a little slower than in the pulpit, and it

* Since reading the editor's note, prefixed to [vol. ii., p. 102], of Mr. Hall's collected works, it has been considered necessary to state that, however "gross" the "taste," in his opinion, which dictated the passage there referred to, so far from Mr. Hall's objections to the Established Church having suffered any diminution, they followed him through the whole of his life, and but increased with his declining years. The same may be stated as to his early political principles. "Educated" (to use his own words) "in the principles of Mr. Fox, and in the purest and best days of Mr. Pitt, to which advancing years and experience have increased his attachment, it is impossible that he should entertain a doubt that an important reform in our representation is essentially connected with the freedom, the glory, and the happiness of the British empire."—GREENE.

will be only thinking aloud." "No, sir, I cannot do that." "May I beg, sir, that you will make the trial of the exordium, and I do not think that you would experience any inconvenience." "No, sir, I must decline it." A short time after this, on Mrs. Hall's urging the subject upon him, I supported her: when she had left the room, he remained silent for a few moments, and then rose from the sofa, and in a most serious and determined manner said, "Mr. Greene, I must beg that you will never mention the subject of writing for the press any more. I am quite teased about it: the frequent solicitations of my friends have become quite unpleasant to me."

Although this was decisive, a few weeks only elapsed before his friends at Bristol resolved to make a united effort to prevail upon him to publish, in consequence of a series of most beautiful practical sermons which he had recently delivered, on the ground of their own gratification, their usefulness to the public, and as a memorial for their children. The Rev. W. Anderson prepared a document in the form of a respectful requisition, which was afterward fairly drawn out, and signed by the deacons, the principal members and subscribers at Broadmead, and by the Rev. John Foster, and myself. A deputation was then appointed to wait upon Mr. Hall. He received them very kindly, and promised to take the subject into serious consideration. He afterward expressed to me the great pleasure he received by a testimonial and requisition so respectable. I did hope for some time that he would seriously set about the work, as he went so far as to prepare pens and paper for the purpose.

One day the conversation turned upon the different characters among our acquaintance. It has been stated that Mr. Hall possessed great discrimination with regard to character. It was seldom, however, that he censured any person without noticing some redeeming quality which they might possess. The following is an instance: "Mr. —— is too much taken up with the world, sir; he is, however, always glad to see me when I call upon him, but he is overdone with business. If you observe, sir, he always stoops when he walks out, and looks towards the ground, as if he were *of the earth, earthy:* still, there is something very amiable and kind in his natural disposition, sir; if he were not so absorbed in business, I should have great hope of him; he is a very attentive hearer. Again, sir, there is Mr. ——, how uncouth he is, sir! Why, sir, that behaviour would not do in the world; he cannot be aware how offensive it is, or certainly, as a religious man, he would endeavour to correct it. Many persons forget, sir, that those are Christian precepts: *Be courteous, tender, and kind-hearted.*"*

Mr. Hall once preached a sermon, the design of which was to show

* Perhaps of all men, Mr. Hall had the greatest dislike to unmeaning and insincere compliments. On one occasion he was invited to meet a large dinner-party. The lady of the house prepared every delicacy the season furnished, and laid out her table in the first style of elegance. On the party being assembled, and while taking their seats, she began to apologize to Mr. Hall that she could only offer him so plain a dinner, professed her great sorrow, and hoped he would excuse the absence of better entertainment. Grieved with so gross a violation of propriety and Christian simplicity, Mr. H. retorted with considerable severity of manner: "Well, madam, why did you not get something better? you knew that I was coming."—B.

the propriety of a kind and courteous demeanour. The subject was selected from Gen., xvii., 7. He observed, that "Abraham's humility and condescension were very conspicuous: he *yielded* to Lot, when he might have *commanded*: Lot, on the contrary, was selfish. Abraham was a mighty prince; yet, when he purchased the land of the children of Heth (though he had learned from prophecy that they were to be excluded by God for their idolatry), the father of the faithful bowed himself down to the children of Heth, which was the strongest expression of humility and condescension. Christianity teaches that civility and decorum in the intercourse of life, of which mere worldly politeness is only the shadow. Study, my brethren, a lovely behaviour, and not only *whatever is lovely*, but whatever gives dignity and grace to piety."

On another occasion Mr. Hall said, "There is such a thing as being venerable and majestic, and yet not being lovely. Even the reproofs given by Jesus Christ to his enemies were without harshness, and his dignity without ostentation or pride. The loveliness of his demeanour threw over his character an evening ray of softness and beauty. Kind and courteous behaviour appeals to the heart of every one; and to attain it, let us set before ourselves a character that is universally beloved, and, degenerate as times are, we shall not be without examples."

While Mr. Hall was at the farthest remove from levity in the pulpit, no man was more amiable, lively, and engaging in the social circle; thus furnishing a striking contrast to a certain class of preachers, who, though gloomy and morose in private life, amuse their hearers with foolish remarks and ludicrous anecdotes when assembled in the house of God. A circumstance of rather an amusing kind took place some years since: a minister, now no more, who had been addicted to this lamentable habit, was appointed to preach a sermon on a public missionary occasion; Mr. Hall was also engaged to advocate the same cause in a different part of the day. The sermon by Mr. —— was a striking contrast to the address by Mr. Hall: the one was light, ludicrous, and trifling; the other solemn, instructive, and energetic. At the close of the day, when both parties met around the social hearth, Mr. Hall became lively and extremely amusing. "Brother Hall," said the old gentleman, "I am surprised at you." "Surprised at me, sir! surprised at me, sir! Why are you surprised at me, sir?" "Why, brother Hall, it appears inconsistent for you to indulge in frivolous conversation after delivering so serious a discourse!" "Indeed, sir," replied Mr. Hall, "I don't think I am by any means inconsistent, sir: the truth is, brother ——, I keep my nonsense for the fireside, while you publish yours from the pulpit."

Mr. Hall regretted the prevalence of a worldly spirit in our religious institutions; evincing itself in a fondness for display, and choosing presidents and vice-presidents on account of their rank, without regard to their efficiency or their religious principles. Upon this subject he observed, "This is confiding in an arm of flesh; it is a species of carnal policy, and is opposed to the spirit of the apostle, when

he said, *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; and mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan.* Before the final prevalence of Christianity, the Church, the pure Church of Christ, will appear in her original Christian simplicity, using no other weapons than those of union, of prayer, and of supplication."

Mr. Hall seldom consented to appear upon a platform: "There should be less speaking and more prayer, sir; that is the only thing which *has power with God;* I don't like so much parade and ostentation, sir."*

I once accompanied him to a public missionary meeting in Bristol, in which he had been earnestly requested to take a part. As the time drew near, he appeared very reluctant to leave the house. "Oh, sir," said he, "we need not go yet: we shall be time enough; I do not want to make myself conspicuous on a platform." On finding that the avenues were thronged, he immediately turned back, saying, "We cannot get in; we had better go home!" and then returned. In the course of conversation, Mr. Hall stated his opinion upon the general subject of Christian missions, and the manner in which he conceived they ought to be conducted. "I think, sir," observed Mr. Hall, "that our missionary societies would be much more successful if the management of them was strictly confined to the Church, or to associations of churches, in one, two, or more counties, according to their numbers and means of supplying funds. Instead of forming auxiliaries to a metropolitan body, I would have the churches in each district manage their own mission, and choose from among themselves men of prudence, well known to be duly qualified for missionary service, according to the description given by the apostle: *One that is blameless: the husband of one wife; vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach,* &c. By this plan, a reciprocal interest would be maintained between the association and the missionaries, which would be increased by local attachment; they would, as it were, be identified with each other in a common cause. Monthly prayer-meetings would thus be rendered doubly interesting, and better attended, from natural feelings of anxiety to learn the particulars of the operations of their own brethren and sisters in a far country; and by becoming acquainted with their trials, failures, or successes, the people would be excited to that fervent prayer which *availeth much.* In addition to this, expensive metropolitan establishments would be avoided, as well as those large sums for travelling expenses incurred by the present system, called '*less expenses;*' which, in many instances, amount to ten and twelve per cent. before the money reaches the treasury, where it undergoes another salvage for management before it becomes available for the missionaries."

Mr. Hall was much grieved with the want of economy in managing the finances of some of our public institutions. "When you consider, sir," said he, "the sources from which these moneys are derived, and

* See Mr. Hall's Letters to Dr. Ryland, vol. iii., p. 257, of this edition of his collected works.—B.

the objects to which they are intended to be appropriated, there ought to be no improvident expenditure of any kind. I know a Mr. ——, who is employed in travelling and collecting for the Bible Society; he puts up at the principal inn in the place where he happens to visit; and rather than exert himself to rise early and travel in the stage-coach, I have heard that he takes a postchaise at the expense of the Society. These things ought not to be countenanced; I invariably endeavour to travel on such occasions, sir, outside of the coach; and when, from indisposition, I am compelled to hire a postchaise, I pay the extra expense out of my own pocket."

It is certainly remarkable, that among the many attacks which have been made upon the Bible Society, the subject referred to by Mr. Hall has met with so little attention. If those clergymen who have lately endeavoured to interrupt the harmony of that excellent institution would apply their energies to an examination of the immense expenses incurred by agents, &c., they would accomplish much more good than by attempting to introduce tyrannical and illiberal tests.

I inquired Mr. Hall's opinion of the restoration of the Jews to their own land; observing, that some years ago, in a conversation which I had with Mr. Jay, of Bath, he understood the prophecies generally in a figurative and spiritual sense, and did not suppose that the Jews would be literally restored to the Holy Land as a distinct people, but that the promises of their future glory related to their incorporation with the churches of Christ. "Well, sir," said Mr. Hall, "Mr. Jay is great authority certainly, but I entirely differ from that opinion. I conceive that the prophecies are so express as to the future restoration of the Jews to their own land, that it is weakening the sense of Scripture to give any other interpretation. Their return from the Babylonish Captivity was only partial, and that for a short time; whereas a number of prophecies may be adduced, which expressly declare, that *they are never more to go out; that my servant David shall be their prince for evermore;* and that their return is to be the signal for the conversion of the heathen world, *when the heathen shall see my sanctuary* (*or my glory*) *in the midst of thee for evermore.* I know there are many good men who entertain a different opinion from myself, sir; but I think we Gentiles are very vain in making the prophecies subservient to us, by supposing that we are the *temple of the Lord*, and that the Jews are to be incorporated in *our* churches; forgetting *that to* THEM *belong the fathers, the glory, and the promises.* The Gentiles consider this view of the subject as too humiliating. The Apostle Paul, however, is of a different opinion: he says, *If the falling away of the Jews be the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?* evidently implying that the Gentiles will then be the recipients of still greater glory. I cannot make, sir, any thing of the temple so minutely and accurately described by Ezekiel, on any other than a literal sense; that, at the restoration of the Jews, it is intended as a model of the future temple then to be built, and this will be at the period of the millennial glory. My opinion of the millennium," said Mr. Hall, "is very different to that of many divines: instead of con-

fining it to a thousand years, I conceive that it will be for a thousand prophetic days of years, or that a definite period is put for an indefinite. It appears to me, reasoning analogically, to be contrary to the usual operations of the Deity to suppose otherwise. Four thousand years elapsed after the promise made to our first parents, before our Saviour appeared: *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent;* and it will probably be two thousand more from his appearance to the final triumphs of Christianity. If you reflect upon the length of time which has passed in preparation, and the vast machinery of means employed, you will perceive the unreasonableness of this hypothesis, by which it appears that more time will be spent in raising the scaffold than is intended for the duration of the building itself."

Mr. Hall preached, about this time, a very fine sermon from these words: *O Thou that hearest prayer, to Thee shall all flesh come.* The Rev. John (now Dr.) Leifchild exchanged with him the following Sabbath evening. I went to hear Mr. Hall. After the service, he said, "How came you to leave Broadmead, sir, and follow me? It served you right; I gave you the same sermon I preached last Sabbath." I replied that "It was from the same text, but the filling up was very different." "I will tell you the reason of that, sir; when I preached it last, I found that I had too much matter for one sermon, and was obliged to contract it, to keep within the limits of time; so that I suppressed some parts at Mr. Leifchild's, and introduced others." But the most extraordinary sermon, for effect and impression, I ever heard from Mr. Hall, or, perhaps, he ever delivered, was at Bristol, from these words: *Beloved, now we are the sons of God: and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* It is impossible to give any more than a brief outline. He said, "The felicity of the future world is very imperfectly known: *it doth not yet appear.* But the period is coming when it will be known; this will be at the appearance of Jesus Christ; *when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* The effect of this will be a perfect knowledge of Christ, and a conformity to him. The knowledge we shall then have will be clear and perfect, freed from all earthly adhesions; *now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face: now we know but in part, but then shall we know even as we are known.* It will be distinct and clear; not that sort of knowledge which we obtain from propositions, by reasoning and argument, by comparing one thing with another, considering their mutual relations, connexions, and dependencies; but we shall see things as they are, in their essences and principles, without labour, study, or research; the knowledge of them will be intuitive, without effort, striking upon our minds at once. This will be at the glorious appearance of Jesus Christ—*when he shall appear:* the knowledge of him thus produced will be transforming. Communion with Christ by faith is one of the greatest pleasures of a Christian. In those seasons when it is fully realized and enjoyed, he needs no other society. What, then, must the full vision of him pro-

duce, when we shall *see him as he is*, without a veil! One sight of him will make us pure and holy, or there may be those scintillations of glory proceeding from him and falling on us, which will change us into the same image from glory to glory." Then, as the touchstone of our state and condition, Mr. Hall put this question: "What reason have *we* to believe that, when he shall appear, *we* shall be like him? Is it such as will satisfy our desires? Can we say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee? As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.*" These were some of the general ideas; but it is impossible to give a conception of the sermon but from its effects. A clergyman, who had never heard Mr. Hall before, observed to his friend, at the close of the service, that he never heard any thing like it; and that he could hardly tell whether he was in the body or out of it. Several persons were taken ill from the extraordinary excitement.* A physician of my acquaintance told me on the Monday afternoon that he had not got over the impression. Several of the deacons and others declared that they had never heard any thing to equal it. I did not recover from the effects before the Wednesday, when I called upon Mr. Hall, and inquired whether he had heard of the extraordinary effects produced by the sermon of Sabbath evening: "No, sir," he replied, "I was not aware of any thing remarkable in it; I should have thought you very candid, sir, if you had told me that it was an inferior sermon."

An American gentleman,† having taken the tour of Europe, was very anxious to see Mr. Hall before his return, and procured a letter of introduction for that purpose On his arrival at Bristol, I was invited to meet him at Mr. Hall's house on the Sabbath evening; the next evening a party was made up. Mr. Hall was very much interested with him as an intelligent man. In the course of the evening, while Mr. Hall and the celebrated John Foster were engaged in conversation, the gentleman observed, "You cannot conceive, sir, the exquisite feelings I have at this moment in being in company with two such great men; no persons are more admired in the United States than Robert Hall and John Foster; and, on my return, there will be the greatest anxiety to hear the particulars of this interview." I inquired his opinion of Mr. Hall's preaching on the previous Sabbath. "Why,

* I am well aware that, to persons who never heard Mr. Hall, this, and many similar expressions which have been employed as to the effects of his preaching, may appear hyperbolical; it may be forgiven, therefore, if I mention what occurred at Kettering about thirty years ago, an account of which I received soon after from several persons who were present. The sermon on *The Vanity of Man apart from his Immortality*, which appears in the third volume of this edition of his works, was originally prepared at the request of the venerable Andrew Fuller, and delivered at a meeting of ministers at Kettering. The house was greatly crowded, and the excitement became intense. The preacher had proceeded but a little way, when, as was very frequently the case, the whole congregation had risen from their seats; he went on a little farther, when a large number were standing where they should have sat, and long before the sermon was concluded, not a few, altogether unconscious of the fact, were standing on the tops of the pews. After he had done, the preacher retired to the vestry, and one of the ministers rose to announce the hymn to be sung; it was some time before he could so far collect his powers as to do this, and this done, the choir attempted again and again, but in vain, to sing it. A minister ascended the pulpit to pray, but he was utterly incapacitated for the act, and Mr. Hall was literally compelled to return to the pulpit to offer the closing prayer and to dismiss the congregation. After that time, Mr. Hall chose, on public occasions, whenever he could do it, to conclude the service with a short prayer immediately after the sermon.—B.

† The Rev. W. B. Sprague, D.D., of Albany.—B.

sir, when he commenced his sermon in the morning, I was not at all struck with him, and was ready to inquire, Is this the great Robert Hall? but, in a few minutes, he opened, as it were a battery; and the effects of it were such, that I thought I should have fallen from my seat. I was quite electrified; as soon as I had recovered from one shock, it was succeeded by a second and a third. I never heard any thing to be compared with it." In short, this American gentleman was in a perfect state of enthusiasm.*

I think it was in the month of February that Mr. Hall told me that he had commenced Matthew Henry. He observed, "I have often read portions of it, and consulted it; but I have now begun with the first chapter of Genesis, and I mean to read the work through regularly; I have set myself, sir, two chapters every morning, and I anticipate it as a feast. That is the way to read Matthew Henry, sir; I discover new beauties in him every day, that are not obvious when reading detached parts. I would advise you to adopt the same method, sir; you will be quite delighted with it. I have found that the most pious persons of my acquaintance, in the latter period of their lives, have been great readers of Henry. There must be something next to inspiration in him, sir; for as face answers to face, so does the heart of one Christian to another." I asked his opinion of Scott's Commentary. "Oh, it is a good work, sir; but it is not to be compared to Henry: there is not that unction of spirit which there is in Henry." About a month or six weeks after this, he said, "Well, sir, I continue my plan of reading Matthew Henry every morning, and have come to the second chapter of Exodus; and am more and more delighted with him."

We did not meet again till September, 1829, when Mr. Hall paid his accustomed visit to Cambridge. Little did I imagine that I was about

* Perhaps the following account, furnished by a friend from his travelling journal, may prove acceptable to the reader. It is dated at Leicester:

"Went to hear Robert Hall; his text was the words, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' Was exceedingly delighted with his sermon, which was correct and elegant in the composition, and rapid in the delivery. His language was chaste in the extreme; his argumentation was close; his illustrations were forcible; and his metaphors, though sparingly employed, strikingly beautiful. I was told that his sermon was, however, on the whole, a pure specimen of his simple style. Learning that he was to preach in the evening, I made up my mind to enjoy another rich, intellectual repast, hoping that it might display him in a different character.

"Went at half past six to hear Robert Hall. His subject was '*The power of God.*' It was, without exception, the most wonderful sermon I ever heard in my life. Every quality which could have been called into exercise on such an occasion seemed concentrated in this one sermon; profoundly metaphysical, without bewildering himself or his hearers; and elegant, without the shadow of affectation; rapid in delivery, without confusion; energetic, without rant; devout, without enthusiasm; commanding, without austerity; affectionate, without cant; argumentative, without pedantry; the whole effect was beyond any thing that it is possible to conceive of pulpit eloquence. A powerful voice seemed all that was wanting to complete the model of the orator; but even this defect was often totally hidden by the energy of his delivery, and the sublimity of his conceptions; while the weakness of his physical powers seemed to heighten the attention and increase the admiration of his auditory. He appeared to speak with much, labour and was frequently obliged to clear his voice, in order to make himself heard. His voice was, however, very even till within a few minutes of the close, when he became intensely earnest, and the rapidity, which before appeared scarcely capable of augmentation, increased to a degree that was quite overpowering to his auditory. Although preaching to his own congregation, who habitually heard him twice every Sabbath, the silence was so great, that during the very short intervals when he stopped to clear his voice, or to wipe the perspiration which flowed profusely from his forehead, a pin might have been heard to drop. He preached entirely without notes, and I should conclude, from his manner of expression on the only two or three occasions when his ideas appeared to flow too rapidly for utterance, that he had not previously done more than arrange his ideas, without troubling himself to clothe them with words. His command of words is truly astonishing, and were this not the case, his hearers must often be deprived of the benefit of his stupendous ideas. I left the chapel with a strong impression that the journey from London to Leicester would have been amply rewarded had it been only by hearing this surprising sermon."—B.

to hear him for the last time, and that, too, in the place where I first listened to his "hallowed" eloquence. His text was, *The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all.* The service was attended by several dignitaries of the University, by Lord Osborne, the county member, &c.

The Rev. Mr. Edmonds preached in the afternoon, when Mr. Hall was present. The evening was spent together. He expressed himself much pleased with the sermon. "What a marvellous sermon Mr. Edmonds gave us this afternoon, sir; it was striking and impressive. I wish that I could preach such a sermon." I spent the Tuesday with him at the house of Mr. Fordham, at Melbourne Bury. Mr. Gurney,* the barrister, was there. We met for the last time *in the body.*

Mr. Hall closed his illustrious career at his residence in Ashley Place, Bristol, on Monday, February 21, 1831. He appeared for the last time in the pulpit at Broadmead on the 6th of the same month. The evening discourse has been considered one of his most interesting addresses.† The attack, which was sudden and unexpected, took place on the following Thursday evening, while he was engaged in preparing the usual monthly discourse prior to the administration of the Lord's Supper. On the morning of the 20th, a note was received by the officiating minister, soliciting the prayers of the church and congregation for their "*dying pastor;*" the usual afternoon sermon was omitted, and a meeting held for the purpose of commending him to God. It presented a scene of audible weeping: the tears of his affectionate people, however, formed a happy contrast to the hallelujahs of heaven, with which he was about to be welcomed as *a king and a priest unto God.* After a severe struggle, borne with the most exemplary piety and Christian fortitude, his eloquent tongue having terminated its appeal to mortals, invoked the arrival of his Saviour and his God—*Come, Lord Jesus, come*—and was then hushed forever. His eldest daughter, whose filial piety bound her to the spot, added, "*quickly.*" The dying man gazed upon his child; a father's affection kindled the brilliancy of his fading eye, and a smile more than mortal spoke a father's blessing. His passing spirit entered upon a purer and more congenial clime, and united in the song of the seraphim and the church of the First-born, who serve God day and night in his temple. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord: Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.*

It would be vain to attempt a lengthened notice of the character of this excellent man, since it has been undertaken by those whose talents eminently qualify them for the task. We may, however, be permitted to observe, that, while Mr. Hall obtained an almost unexampled popularity by the productions of his mighty mind, it was ardent and unaffected piety that endeared him to those who enjoyed his society and friendship. Devotedness to God was his peculiar characteristic.‡ If

* Now Sir John Gurney, Baron of the Court of Exchequer.—B.

† Notes of this sermon will be found in this volume, from the pen of the Rev. F. Trestrail.—B.

‡ While Mr. Hall was at Leicester, he became acquainted with a plain but excellent man, a deacon of a neighbouring Baptist church. Walking with him in the fields one day, Mr. Hall asked him

in the great congregation he was revered as a *head* among the thousands of Israel; when leading their devotions, and pleading their cause at the footstool of mercy, he was, emphatically, *as a little child.* Amid the socialities of the family circle, Mr. Hall was lively and interesting; adding to its pleasures by the amiability of his disposition and the inexhaustible variety of his conversation. For his views as a Dissenter, we refer the reader to the "Apology for the Freedom of the Press," and his masterly strictures on "Zeal without Innovation." As a Baptist, he united, with a peculiar regard for the distinguishing sentiments of his own denomination, a strong affection towards all who *love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.* His devotedness to the cause of liberty led him to oppose intolerance in every shape. He was not only a firm believer in the doctrines of Christianity, but the avowed champion of our most holy faith. Before his brilliant eloquence his opponents stood abashed; and with his powerful pen he furnished an antidote to the sophistry of modern infidels, which will be read with interest while truth can boast an advocate or genius an admirer.

what he considered to be the most decisive evidence of personal religion. The answer I have now forgotten, but Mr. Hall replied by asking him whether he did not think that *supreme delight in God* was the most satisfactory evidence a man could enjoy of his acceptance with Him. Kindling as he proceeded, he said, "Why, sir, I often altogether doubt my religion, till I turn to the fact, which I can never question, that the character of God as he has revealed himself in the Scriptures is the object of my highest admiration and love." So thought the Psalmist: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on the earth I desire beside thee.*—B.

NOTES OF SERMONS.

NOTES OF SERMONS.

I.

THE CREATORSHIP AND DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.*

JOHN, i., 2, 3: *The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.*

[Preached at Bridge-street Chapel, Bristol, Aug. 15, 1824.]

THE divinity of Jesus Christ has always been considered by Christians as the chief corner-stone in the edifice of Christianity. Those who have surveyed all parts of the Christian system with the closest attention, and who have been most deeply influenced by the spirit of religion, have in every age evinced the greatest attachment to this fundamental doctrine. Nor have they regarded it as merely a sublime and abstruse speculation, but as intimately connected with Christian holiness. Were it true that it is a mere speculation, it would indeed be little worth our earnestly contending for; since the grand object of all that is revealed is unquestionably our personal and practical improvement. But it is found to have the most powerful influence on this; it involves the greatest of all motives to Christian piety and obedience; and hence it justly occupies a most important place in the Christian system: hence the beloved disciple lays the foundation of his gospel record in this article, and begins with tracing the existence of Jesus Christ to a higher state of being, exhibiting Him as incarnate Deity, as Emmanuel, God with us. "In the beginning," says he, "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him. And the Word was made flesh."—(John, i., 1–3, 10, 12, 14.)

Of the many Scripture arguments for His divinity, one of the chief is that which arises from His *creation* of the universe. It is this which I propose to consider in the following discourse. I shall not attempt to show the connexion which subsists between His divinity and His creatorship, as it seems to be quite unnecessary; few will for a moment doubt that "He who created all things is GOD." It will be sufficient simply to establish the fact, that Jesus Christ is represented in Scripture as the Author of

* From the Notes of Rev. T. Grinfield, M.A., late of Trinity College, Cambridge.

creation; this will demonstrate the place which He holds in the scale of being. The doctrine (as you are well aware) which we hold concerning the Deity, is that of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as three distinct persons, mysteriously coexisting in *one* GOD. Each of these Divine Persons is represented as concurring in all the acts and purposes of Deity; though each, for reasons which we cannot fully understand, has specific operations of His own. One of the common acts of Deity is creation; and this, on apostolic authority, is attributed peculiarly to Jesus Christ.

It may be proper to premise here, that we suppose ourselves to address those who admit the final authority of the apostles on a subject like the present; we assume their testimony as our basis, and argue upon it. If the doctrine in question appear in but one passage of apostolic testimony, that passage alone is sufficient to establish it; if it appear in many passages, the evidence is proportionally stronger; not because one testimony is not decisive, but because a multitude of passages reflect light on each other, and exclude the possibility of a mistake in the interpretation. Amid a multitude, the text and its context afford, perhaps, the strongest single evidence that can be produced. And let it be observed, that it is not necessary that the apostle should state the divinity of Jesus Christ in express terms; if he asserts a doctrine altogether unintelligible without this doctrine, the end is answered.

"In the *beginning*," says the apostle, "was the Word." By "the beginning," in the judgment of all the best interpreters, we are to understand a period prior to creation. If this be the true sense, it necessarily follows that Christ created all things, and Himself was uncreated; since nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that, prior to the creation, there existed any other being than the uncreated Author of all existence. Jesus Christ, therefore, who existed before the created universe, is the parent and principle of existence, the source and origin of the universe.

Some, however, have attempted to put another meaning upon the expression, and refer it to "the beginning of the gospel." This might be admissible, if the whole connexion did not evidently oppose it: it is true, the apostle (Phil., iv., 15) speaks of "the beginning of the gospel," and we read of the "Holy Ghost falling on the apostles in the beginning" (Acts, xi., 15); but the context requires a different sense in the passage before us. For if we suppose this to be the apostle's meaning, the proposition with which he opens his gospel amounts to this, that "In the beginning of the gospel, Jesus Christ, its Author, existed." A proposition so puerile, so nugatory, so nearly approaching to an identical tautology—introduced at the commencement of his inspired narration—cannot be admitted: it must unavoidably be supposed that the Author of Christianity existed at the beginning of Christianity. According to such an interpretation, the following

verse, which is part of the text—"The same was in the beginning with God"—becomes unintelligible or absurd. It is easy to perceive how men must be tortured with difficulties, before they can be brought to embrace such explanations. But take "the beginning" in the same sense in which Moses uses the expression in the opening of Genesis, to which the apostle evidently alludes—understand it as signifying the period prior to creation—and all is easy and natural; but the divinity of Jesus Christ is a necessary consequence.

We now come to the declaration, "All things were *made* by Him." Such a declaration would alone be sufficient to establish the divinity of Him whom it respects. But you may see it repeated in Col., i., where Christ is introduced as "the image," not the shadowy, but the substantial image "of the invisible God, the First-born," which means (as divines agree) the Lord and Heir, "of every creature:" "for by Him were all things created." Again, in Hebrews, i., the apostle reminds us that "God, who spoke to the fathers by the prophets, hath spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." In the book of the Revelation, Christ calls Himself "the Root," as well as "the Branch of David." He calls Himself also "the Beginning," or vital principle, "of the creation of God."—(Rev., iii., 14; xxii., 16.)

I must now advert to those very unnatural glosses by which it has been attempted to set aside the doctrine connected with the just and obvious interpretation of these passages. And, first, the plain meaning of the declaration, "All things were *made* by Him," must by no means be abandoned. It is not to be imagined (our opponents say) that the creation of the external world is here attributed to Jesus Christ. The verb *εγενετο* must not be rendered "made or created" (as in our version), in reference to nature; but it must be referred to the Christian dispensation, and rendered "came to pass;" "all things in the gospel came to pass by Christ." In opposition to this interpretation, it is replied, that no instance can be produced of *εγενετο* being used in the manner here supposed; whereas there are clear examples of the other sense: in the Septuagint version of Genesis, ch. ii., 1, we read, "This is the book of the *generation* (*γενεσεως*) of the heaven and the earth, in the day when the Lord God created them:" and again, Gen., ii., 4 (not to add other places), the Septuagint substitute the verb *γινομαι* for the Hebrew verb ברא, *to create;* so that, in the opinion of the Septuagint, whose style is well known to be exactly similar to that of the evangelists, no term in the Greek language was to be found so proper to express the act of *creation*, which our objectors are anxious to exclude: every Greek scholar is aware that the established meaning of *γινομαι* is *to be produced*, and that of *γενεσις production.*

In Heb., xi., 3, the apostle says, "By faith we understand that

the worlds were made by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which appear." There is here an allusion to the prevailing notion of the pagan philosophy, that matter had an eternal existence, and that creation was merely the disposal and arrangement of it in the various forms of nature. This notion the apostle opposes in the assertion that the "things which are seen were not made* of things which appear," but created out of nothing. This is a doctrine peculiar to revelation, and (as the apostle declares) a proposition to be embraced "by faith." The only evasion that can be invented here is, that "the present state of things, the gospel dispensation," must be substituted in place of the natural creation. It is needless to examine this interpretation of the words, as it seems to be perfectly unintelligible, and could be extorted only by the necessity of avoiding the obvious meaning. James, once more, uses the same word as that in the text, γενομενος, when he speaks of men as γεγονοτας, "*made* in the image of God." Thus two examples have been given from the Old Testament, and two from the New, where the same verb is used in reference to the creation of nature and of man, which is used in the text. When, therefore, it is asserted that "all things were made by Him," we can understand nothing less than that Jesus Christ is, in the strict sense of Scripture, the Creator of the universe.

In Heb., i., where it is said, "by whom He made the *worlds*," the word rendered "worlds" is not κοσμες, but a different word, αιωνας, which Unitarians would render *dispensations*, and not *worlds*. And how (it may be asked) could Jesus Christ *make* the dispensations, and yet Himself not exist before them all, whether Christian, Mosaic, or Patriarchal? But in Heb., xi., "by faith we understand that the *worlds* were made by the word of God," where the same word αιωνες is used, it is evident that it can refer only to the frame of material nature.

Unhappily for Unitarians, however, the word κοσμος is never used to mean *dispensation;* and *this* is the word that is used in the 10th verse of this first chap. of John: "He was in the *world*, and the *world* (κοσμος) was *made* (εγενετο) by Him;" where it is evident that the proposition expressed is exactly equivalent with that of the text, "*all things* were *made* by Him." Still, the doctrine must not be admitted; no method of escape must be left untried; and never was a more extraordinary method adopted: instead of "the world was *made* by Him," we are to read, "the world was *enlightened* by Him." We inquire on what principle such an alteration is justified? We are informed it is necessary, in order to avoid the obvious meaning: a word, not found in the context, must be inserted to supply the sense, for in the preceding verse the verb φωτιζω in the active use occurs; but here we must understand the same verb used passively: whereas, if understood at all, which is highly unnatural, it ought to be actively, as

* γεγονεναι.

if the world was—not *enlightened*—but *giving* light, by Him! It would be difficult to find such an instance of bold innovation, where no room is allowed for any other meaning than that which the words obviously bear. Nothing can account for such a mode of criticism, but the resolution to maintain a system previously embraced. If this is not adding to the Word of God, that charge can never be justified. The declaration that "the *world* was made by Him," if it stood alone, would forever establish the creatorship, and, consequently, the divinity of Jesus Christ.

This is a brief and a general declaration; but in Col., i., 13, we meet with a careful, elaborate enumeration of *all things*, as *created* by Christ; where the verb rendered "created," κτιζω, is the strongest which the Greek language affords. "All things were created by Him, which are in heaven, and which are in earth, visible and invisible"—(what other things can exist than those which are either in heaven or in earth, either visible or invisible?) —"all were created by Him, and for Him." Here, again, it is pretended that the *gospel* is the new creation thus described. That Christianity is, in certain respects, a new creation, and that it is so called by the apostle, is true (2 Cor., v., 1), but the language of this passage precludes this interpretation of it; for here we have "all things in heaven and earth, invisible and visible;" but Christianity has its empire on earth, its sphere in the visible world. And, what is still more remarkable, all things are expressly created *for* Jesus Christ, as *man;* the sanctification of the soul, the establishment of the redeemed church, is *for* Him. It is the prerogative of Deity alone, to be the final end of things: but Jesus Christ is proclaimed "the Alpha and Omega, the First and Last, the Beginning and End," of all things. We conclude that, if the New Testament teaches us any truth, it teaches us in decisive terms this truth, that Jesus Christ is the Maker of the world.

If we suppose Christ to be the former only of the *new* creation, the Author of the *gospel* economy, every part of the system is clogged with difficulties. In this case, we must suppose Him either merely a prophet, and not the parent of all the blessings of the Christian dispensation: in this case, Paul, Peter, and John have a legitimate claim to a full share in the same honour with their Master; since they were all prophets in the same sense, and the Apostle Paul was the communicator of even more abundant and exalted truth than Jesus Christ Himself. Or, secondly, we must suppose Jesus Christ to be the real origin of all gospel blessings, but not the Creator of all things: and then, I affirm, we make Him the Author of a greater benefit than creation itself: the pardon of sin, the conversion of the soul, and eternal redemption—these are infinitely higher blessings than to be born of a woman! For the visible world exists for the sake of the invisible; great and wonderful as are the works of nature, their chief importance and dignity arises from their being a receptacle

of spiritual and immortal substances. The old heavens and earth (we are informed) shall be no more mentioned or brought to mind, when they give place to the new (Isaiah, lxv.). The renovation of the ruined world is so far a greater work than the creation. Nothing, therefore, is gained by this evasion: it surrounds Christ with a lustre beyond all that nature could bestow upon Him: it displaces Him from the throne of the Creator, only to enthrone Him on the superior elevation of the Redeemer: it exalts Him as our highest Benefactor, and lays us under the deepest of all obligations, in order to deprive Him of an inferior title to our gratitude! It is true, His whole doctrine has been sometimes diluted into the mere doctrine of immortality: how far below the real blessings of His mission this notion falls, I need not stay to prove.

But a question may still be raised, whether Christ may not have created all things as an *instrumental* agent of God, without being Himself God? Though we are not competent to speculate much with safety on this point, yet one thing is clear, which may set our minds at rest: namely, that, throughout all the Scriptures, God claims our worship *as God*, peculiarly on the ground of His being the *Creator* of all things. The sublime prophet Isaiah abounds with arguments of Jehovah to this purpose: "Who is He that stretched out the heavens?" &c. And the Apostle Paul says, "His eternal power and Godhead are clearly understood by the things that are *made*." Creation, we are thus assured, is the clearest evidence of Godhead: but if another person created all things, and yet is not God, then creation is no clear evidence of Deity, and so we must despair of any sufficient proof of the Divine existence. Hence it follows that, if we deny creation to be the grand proof of divinity, or if we deny the divinity of Christ to be proved by His creation of all things, we deny, in effect, the existence of God. Jesus Christ, therefore, is the "true God and eternal life;" He is the First and the Last; the Root of David; the King of kings and Lord of lords.

It remains that I briefly remind you, in two or three particulars, of the practical improvement which this subject suggests.*

1. When such is the majesty of Jesus Christ, what reverence do we owe to the Christian dispensation, what obedience to the words of its Author! With what force does this view of His nature invest that argument of the apostle which opens his Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who formerly spoke by prophets, has now spoken to us by His Son, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person; a Being of a far higher dignity than angels: therefore, let us give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard; for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at

* At this point of transition from the discursive to the appealing part, the preacher made, as on most occasions, a sudden and a striking change of his manner: from having been calmly, though rapidly, argumentative, he became eloquently warm and impassioned.—GRINFIELD.

first began to be spoken by the Lord!" If Jesus Christ created all things, how awfully grand is the Christian dispensation! how nearly has God approached us in the person of His incarnate Son! taking into ineffable union with Himself a portion of our nature! making humanity a temple of the Deity! in allusion to which our Lord spoke of the temple of His body: for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "If he that despised the law of Moses died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God!" In neglecting the salvation of Christ, in disobeying his commands, you are despising the Architect of nature, who created and who sustains all things! "a person worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he that built the house has more honour than the house: for every house has its builder, but He that built all things is God: and Moses was faithful in his house as a servant, but Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house we are, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." No marvel that Christianity was the subject of so much preparation in types and prophecies, when it mingles the widest extremes, unites the Creator to the creature, the eternal to that which is of yesterday; and dignifies this earth, this corner of creation, above all the globes around it, as the residence of incarnate Deity! No wonder that it is said of Christ, of "God manifest in the flesh," that He was "*seen* of angels!" Angels bend from heaven to look into these things, to behold a more amazing spectacle than heaven itself can show! He was "seen of angels!" Take heed, my brethren, lest He be overlooked by any of you! he that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, he alone hath eternal life. Recollect that the gospel of Christ is the very voice of God! recollect that the ministers of His gospel are appointed as his own ambassadors; you are to reverence their word as the word of Christ Himself; for "whosoever receiveth not you," said He, "receiveth not Me, receiveth not Him that sent Me."

2. This doctrine, that Christ created all things, gives an unspeakable dignity to His sufferings. It was the prerogative of Christ to do more in His death than even in His life, to conquer on the cross all His enemies, to be made perfect as our Redeemer by His sufferings, and never to appear so glorious, so mighty to save, as in the depth of His humiliation even to the grave!—and this, because His blood was divine blood! because He Himself was a divine sacrifice! Hence His blood cleanseth from all sin, His sacrifice has almighty virtue to put away all guilt: hence His death was a more striking vindication of the divine character—of its infinite holiness and justice—than could have been effected by the destruction of a guilty world, or even by the horrors of a ruined eternity! In all the dispensations of God's moral providence, there is nothing equal, as a display of His eternal rectitude, to the death of His only-begotten Son! Hence the

supreme importance of the divinity of Jesus Christ; since, without it, we are subjected to the greatest temptation to idolatry, we are compelled to cherish those sentiments of religious gratitude towards a human creature, which are due to God alone. But now there is not the least perplexity in our religion. We are permitted and invited to bow before Jesus Christ with the profoundest reverence, to embrace Him with the most unbounded affection and love, because "the same was in the beginning with God," because "the Word was God." No need to check our regards towards the Redeemer, lest they trespass on the claims of the Creator: both are united in the person of Jesus Christ!

3. The fact announced in the text, that "by Christ were all things made," presents a grand reason for the doctrine so often and so undeniably taught in the New Testament, that "by Christ shall all the world be judged." He who made man is the only Being who can perfectly know all that is in man; and, by such a perfect insight into all hearts, be qualified for the office of Judge of all. Having not only assumed, but having created the human nature, He alone, He, with the infinite ease of omniscience, reads the counsels of all human hearts. And as none who receive the New Testament have ever questioned that He will judge men, so this His acknowledged office proves His title to creatorship and deity.

4. Lastly, how high does this doctrine raise our ideas and our expectations of that glory which is reserved for those who are redeemed by Christ! All things were created by Him, who is "not ashamed to call them brethren." The Creator of the universe has condescended to become their Redeemer and their Brother! A more domestic, a more intimate and affectionate union subsists between Jesus Christ and the Church, which is His body and His bride, than between Himself and those holy angels who are not His bride, but His servants. "The Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living waters." What exalted hopes ought not Christians to form and cherish of their eternal destiny in Christ their Head! Often, my dear brethren, consider Jesus Christ as He is now dignified in heaven! the First-born among many brethren! the First-fruits of them that sleep in Him! They that follow His steps will partake His exaltation, they will be quickened and raised with Him, and "sit down together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus!" They will experience the desire of His heart and behold His glory! changed themselves into the same image, while with open face they behold the glory of the Lord! Be assured that God has greater things in reserve for those who love Him, than eye has seen, or ear heard, or heart of man conceived! and doubt not that those things will bear the full stamp of that eternal love of God, which was realized in the incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ!

II.

IMPORTANCE OF THE DEITY OF CHRIST.*

HEBREWS, i., 1, 2.—*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*

THE design of this epistle appears to be, to confirm the faith of the Jewish converts who had recently renounced Judaism and embraced Christianity. The writer is evidently anxious to accomplish this object, that thereby they might be brought into closer communion with the Divine Being. They had heard his voice in the former dispensation, which was *the word spoken by angels.* But now they heard it in the gospel, which was *begun to be spoken by the Lord.* Jesus Christ is, therefore, prominently set forth in this epistle as the object of faith; and that it might be seen how justly he is so, the apostle speaks of him in terms which, if they have any meaning whatever, plainly declare his divinity.

Hence we perceive the importance of our having scriptural views of Christ. His divinity is not a matter of secondary importance. There are some parts of Christianity which are essential to its existence. Every system has some essential principles, without which it would perish. The religion of Jesus is not destitute of these vital principles, and the doctrine of this chapter is one of them.

In considering the importance of any principle, it may be viewed in two ways: in relation to the system to which it belongs, which is speculative; and in relation to the opinons and hopes of those who receive it, which is practical. We shall consider this doctrine—*the deity of Christ*—in both these views.

I. This doctrine is intimately connected with the dignity of Christianity itself.

In a succeeding portion of this epistle, and in some other parts of his writings, the apostle argues that Christianity is worthy of universal acceptance, because it possesses the highest dignity. It is spoken from heaven. The former dispensation hath no glory in comparison with this, by reason of *the glory which excelleth.* That was *the ministration of death;* this is the ministration of reconciliation and peace. Hence, if they died under Moses's law who were guilty of transgression, those who despise the gospel will be thought worthy of a much *sorer punishment*, because their guilt is so much the greater. But this argument derives all its force from the pre-eminent dignity of the Christian dispensation.

* From notes printed in the EVANGELIST, conducted by the Rev. Drs. Leifchild and Redford.

It is very evident that a message derives much of its character and impressiveness from the character of the messenger; and if the message be important, and the individual from whom it comes be a person of exalted rank, it will be intrusted to the hands of one who will amply sustain its character, and be an adequate representative of the authority of the sender. Thus the Christian dispensation derives infinite dignity from Christ, who is the messenger. It comes from the Divine Being; it is transcendently important in itself, but the dignity and rank of the messenger are not only quite equal to *both*, but they impart additional lustre and glory to the whole system.

It has been asserted that the character of the messenger is of no importance. This may do very well for the purpose which those persons who make such an assertion may have in view, but it is contradictory to all fact and experience. This assertion is utterly at variance with the apostle's argument, and *this* may be the reason why it is hazarded. But it must be remembered that the message which Christ delivered was, in a great measure, concerning *himself*. His character and dignity are, therefore, clearly involved in it. This, then, is the reason why a denial of the divinity of Christ is, in fact, a denial of Christianity, and amounts to a total rejection of the gospel of peace. His dignity, as here set forth, is so intimately interwoven with the whole system, and essential to it, that if it be taken away, the essential and saving truths of revelation go along with it. To deny the dignity of the messenger is a rejection of the message itself.

II. This doctrine is of the highest moment, as it stands connected with the hopes of the Christian.

There are those who contend that we may be saved by the divine mercy alone; that is, without respect to any other person, or the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Mercy is thus exercised, according to their view, without regard to the claims of the holiness of God, or any other of his perfections. There are others who take a contrary view of this matter, and maintain that mercy comes through Christ, and through him alone; and they hold that they are as certainly indebted to *him* for salvation as they are to Jehovah for their existence.

From these two views respecting the manifestation of mercy to man, it is evident that the doctrine we contend for is of great *practical* moment; for according to the way in which we define it, so shall we direct our *hopes*.

There are many methods taken to evade the force of those passages which treat of the practical influence of the doctrine of the atonement. We are told that they are metaphorical. Thus, having first denied the doctrine of the Saviour's divinity, they proceed to explain away the necessity of his atonement—and both must stand or fall together—by coolly assuming the passages which assert its necessity are not to be understood in their obvious, but in a metaphorical sense!

The Scriptures repeatedly declare that trust in Christ is essential to salvation, and this trust recognises him as a Saviour. It is one of the most interesting announcements respecting the final triumphs of the truth, and the universal spread of Christianity, that *in him* (*i. e.*, Christ) *shall the Gentiles trust.*

Now, if he be not a divine person, how can this trust be justified? Remember, it is the great end of Christianity to draw away the mind from the creature, and to fix it upon the Creator, who is *God over all, blessed for evermore.* Yet we are exhorted to place our affections and our trust in Christ. On any other supposition than the one contended for, that He is divine, we are not only guilty of idolatry in paying divine honours to him, but Christianity absolutely contradicts itself. As *this* is impossible, we are clearly right in maintaining the doctrine taught in this chapter, since on no other ground can we justify our placing reliance on him for salvation.

Those believers in this doctrine who suppose that men may be saved who deny the doctrine of the atonement, contradict themselves. For why do they place their trust in the Saviour, when, according to such a notion, the act is unnecessary, and they may be saved without it? Surely they are guilty of a work of supererogation! But the real fact is, that this opinion springs from mistaken views of the nature and extent of Christian charity. As this doctrine is so intimately interwoven with the whole system of religion, and is incorporated with the New Testament, and is the peculiar doctrine of it, we only follow out the necessary consequences of embracing the truth when we say, that, without a cordial reception of this doctrine, or a reliance in Jesus Christ as our atoning sacrifice, salvation is clearly impossible. Hence, those who have denied the deity of the Saviour, have sunk lower and lower in error, until they have lost all that is peculiar or valuable in Christianity, and they conduct us to the unmeaning conclusion, that his sufferings and death were simply proofs of his own sincerity, and moral illustrations of the doctrines which he taught!

III. This doctrine is of the highest importance, as it is connected with the object and design of worship.

The worship of God is the most solemn recognition of his being and perfections—of our relation and dependance—and is an act of the highest homage we can pay.

But even in the days of his flesh, there were occasions when similar homage was paid to Christ. What renders these acts more interesting and instructive is this: they were performed at those times when his divinity beamed forth, as it were, from behind the dark cloud of his humanity. This is a sufficient answer to those arguments which are built upon the assertion, that such passages were only designed to express the *high esteem* which the disciples cherished for their Master.

The Apostle Paul paid divine honours to Christ when he called

upon him to take away the thorn in the flesh. *For this cause I besought* THE LORD *thrice, that it might depart from me; but* HE *said unto me,* MY *grace is sufficient for thee: most gladly, therefore, will I glory in mine infirmity, that the power of* CHRIST *may rest upon me.* Some have thought to get rid of this difficulty by intimating that, on this occasion, there was some peculiar display of the Saviour's glory; for that he does possess some glory peculiar to himself, they are compelled to admit. But the presence or absence of the object of worship has nothing whatever to do with idolatry. The act is the same, whether the object be visible or not; for idolatry consists in placing any object in that place in our worship or affections which the living God alone should occupy. If Jesus Christ be not a divine person, there is no possibility of our evading the charge of idolatry; and to that charge many of his disciples, when he was on earth, and the Apostle Paul in particular, are equally open.

But the apostle himself adds, *that whoever shall call on the name of the* LORD *shall be saved.* This is a quotation from Joel; and the word used there is JEHOVAH. It is plain, therefore, that both the prophet and the apostle refer to the *same* person. The sense of the peculiar name given by each must also be the same. THE LORD of the apostle is equivalent to the JEHOVAH of the prophet. Consequently, the early preachers of the gospel did not preach the Father, but Christ; and if they did not preach him as divine, we should like to see how any method of escape from the dilemma into which this train of remark conducts us can in any way be devised. If the doctrine be revealed, we should be guilty of an act of injustice and insult to Christ if we did not pay him the honour justly due; if it be not clearly revealed, then we are placed in a state of painful suspense, and are compelled to deny the sufficiency of the Scriptures. Since we are directed to call on Jesus Christ for salvation, the doctrine now before us is of the highest moment, in reference to the proper objects of religious worship.

IV. It is also of the utmost importance, as our future prospects are materially affected by it.

If we believe this doctrine, we can enter fully into those representations which assign to him the condemnation of the wicked to eternal ruin, and the admission of the righteous to endless joy. The Scriptures plainly declare that he is to be the *Judge of the world. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.* Those, therefore, who deny his divinity, also deny his prerogative in judging. In this they act consistently, for one doctrine cannot be held at the expense of the other. But how sad are the effects of embracing one error, or denying one important doctrine, when it leads to such fearful *liberties* with divine truth!

The *happiness* of true believers consists in being made like to Christ, and dwelling continually with him. That happiness *now* is not complete, for we are neither *completely* like him, nor con-

tinually with him. But in heaven it will be perfect, because there *we shall be like him*, and also because we shall be with him, for *we shall see him as he is*. But how can these things enter into the prospects of those who deny this doctrine? Hence those who believe it, and those who deny it, have two different religions! The latter maintain that we shall be saved by our own actions, without any substitute, through the divine mercy. The former think his atonement the only ground of hope. *They* think that we are guilty of idolatry—*we* think they are guilty of injustice to Christ. Then surely our prospects must be greatly affected by a rejection, or a reception, of this doctrine. Deny it, and, alas! how they are narrowed. Receive it, and they expand and gather brightness; for Christ becomes the light of heaven—the pattern which his people are to resemble—and the fountain of everlasting glory and joy. But what attraction *can* there be in the future prospects of those who deny this doctrine?

In maintaining these principles, we cannot fairly be charged with a want of charity. If charity consists in offering up importunate prayer for our fellow-creatures—if it consists in seeking to promote their welfare—God forbid we should fall short of it, or be deficient in its exercise. But if it be to think with men, it must have its *limits*. If duty be a fundamental matter—if certain principles be essential to Christianity, then it is a compliment to men, and a trifling with their immortal souls, to say they are safe while they deny this doctrine. But we must not compliment Christianity away in this manner; and we are fully justified in separating from the communion of all those who hold this great error. They may be virtuous and honourable, but with discrepancies in religion we dare not unite. Light must not have fellowship with darkness, nor must we combine truth with error. How can we *unite* at the table of the Lord, when one commemorates a martyr or a hero, and the other a Saviour dying in his room, as a sacrifice for sin? In inquiring whether Christ be divine, you inquire what is to be the nature of your hope, your refuge, your foundation. They will either be bright, and safe, and strong, according as you believe him to be divine; or dark, and weak, and dangerous, as you believe him to be merely human. A mistake here is fatal, for it uproots the foundations of faith and hope, *for there is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved.*

III.

THE TRUTH AS IN JESUS.*

EPHESIANS, iv., 20, 21: *But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.*

[Preached in Broadmead, Bristol, Sept. 14, 1828.]

IN the commission given by Christ to his apostles, we behold him sending them forth as heralds of mercy to ruined man. Their object plainly was, to rescue the perishing from their danger, by preaching to them the words of salvation, and setting forth the awful consequences of sin. He gave them a pledge of his presence, in order to animate them amid the difficulties of their enterprise. They went forth under the most solemn sanctions: *Whoso receiveth you receiveth me.* When they entered into a house, they were to salute it. If a city refused to hear them, they were to depart, and shake its *dust from off their feet.* Though they were *sent forth as sheep among wolves*, that they might not be cast down in the prospect of so much peril, he gave them his final promise—*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.*

The words of the text are grounded upon the same principles. Referring to the corruptions of the heathen world, the apostle says to the Ephesians, *Ye have not so learned* CHRIST. They had not heard Christ personally, but they had believed his word. They were among those to whom our Lord had reference in his memorable rebuke to Thomas, *Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.* The apostles were invested with such authority that they whom they pronounced blessed were blessed indeed. By virtue of this, the Ephesians had believed as though they had heard Christ for themselves, and had been enlightened by him as *the true light.*

Our text presents us with a representation of truth; but the *truth as it is in Jesus;* whether taught by the Spirit of prophecy, by his apostles, or his ministers, it is ever the *truth as it is in Jesus.*

I. *The word of God, in every part, has an obvious and constant tendency to Christ.*

The Scriptures contain a revelation of the Divine nature and attributes, will and perfections. They would have little or no attraction without Christ. It is by *Him* that we know God, and come to God. The Scriptures unfold the Divine purposes of grace; but Christ is the pledge of their fulfilment. They reveal the goodness of God, and inform us that HE *is love:* but in order to be beneficial to us, it is necessary that we should know how it is manifested, and have an example to enable us to comprehend its nature.

They contain rules for the conduct, and a clear exposition of the

* From the notes of the Rev. F. Trestrail.

law ; but what avail would these be without Christ? Just as much as reading to a criminal the statutes at large which condemned him. We see the rules of life exemplified in Christ. He *magnified the law, and made it honourable.* He submitted to it, suffered its penalty, and bore its curse! We can rejoice, therefore, in this bright example of conduct, combining in itself the most perfect submission to justice, and the most perfect display of purity.

The Scriptures reveal the great doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. We are enabled to believe this doctrine, which confirms the truth of the Christian religion, and is the foundation of our hopes of a better life, because Christ hath risen from the dead, and overturned the dominion of the grave. *Death hath, therefore, no more dominion over us:* Jesus has spoiled his power and extracted his sting, and *delivered us, who, through death, had been all our lifetime subject to bondage.*

They speak of the judgment both of quick and dead. The righteous and the wicked, all who have existed in every age, or shall exist in coming times, are to stand before the great tribunal, *to give an account of the deeds done in the body:* but Christ is to be judge of all. He is the final adjudicator of all to their everlasting states. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ;* and the account we have of this transaction is a part of the truth *as it is in Jesus.*

They make known the existence of a future state, as a state of felicity for the righteous, and of misery for the wicked; but what would heaven be without Christ? Its happiness consists in being like him: *We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.* When a good man thinks of heaven, he always associates the Saviour with it. *He desires to depart and to be with Christ;* for in heaven he is to behold his glory. In whatever light the Scriptures are viewed, whatever may be the precepts, doctrines, or promises they contain, the language of the text becomes more and more evident, that it is *the truth as it is in Jesus.*

II. *It appeals to certain effects produced on the heart by its operation.*

The apostle, when speaking of the corruption of the heathen, says to one of the churches, *And such were some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified.* Ye have been taught by a different preceptor; and have learned another and a better lesson.

The truth as it is in Jesus produces effects which nothing else can; and if this may be asserted of Christians, when the profession of religion exposed its adherents to persecution, how much more of us in the present day, when we can *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth?*

1. When we receive the truth as it is in Jesus, we abandon all grounds of merit in relation to our own actions, and place our sole dependance upon the power and grace of the Redeemer. Thus pride, that darling vice of our corrupted nature, is cut up by the roots, and humility becomes a distinguishing feature of the new man.

2. It will extinguish all notions of mere legal obedience to the law, and lead to the perfect obedience of faith. We shall retire from all

hope of salvation through the works of the law, and rejoice in the finished work of Jesus. We shall aspire after the friendship of God, and the possession *of holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.* In the glorious plan of salvation, and its glory is displayed in its effects on the heart and life, God has thrown into eternal shade all human glory. Such is the sanctity of the blood of Christ, that it can cleanse the foulest guilt; such are the transcendent merits of the blessed Saviour, that they constitute an ocean of pure element to drown all our pollution.

3. It produces an entire alteration in our habits and feelings. Every person manifests an obvious change after his conversion. However amiable, upright, and decorous he may be, he is more distinguished than ever for the highest virtue when he becomes a child of God. And if he have been profligate in life and character, darkness and light are not more contrary than his former manner of life and his present. If ancient habits of sin have not been destroyed; if the evil passions of our nature have not been subdued; if all tendencies to evil in thought and feeling have not been checked, we have not learned Christ, nor been taught *the truth as it is in Jesus.* Remember the words of the apostle, *For the grace of God, which hath appeared unto all men, teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and piously in this present evil world.*

4. It is at once a source of anxiety and of consolation. It excites the greatest concern respecting the interests of the soul, and fills the mind with the consolatory and animating hope of endless blessedness in a future state. Like God, the author of it, the truth *can kill, and make alive.*

It excites the all-important inquiry, What *must I do to be saved?* But the wound it inflicts is cured by the same hand. Jesus Christ is *the balm in Gilead, and the physician there.* We cannot estimate this anxiety so as to express it in words, it is so absorbing. We cannot fully depict the power and excellence of the consolations which this hope imparts; it looks for eternal realities, and expects to rise to the fountain of all blessedness.

5. It produces the profoundest humility, and confers the highest dignity. It gives such a view of sin and of the expedient devised by infinite wisdom and love to render the exercise of forgiveness compatible with justice, that the soul is prostrated before God. This is the natural result of such views. It is no degrading position for a penitent sinner to occupy. The deepest prostration before the throne of mercy is the proper attitude for a returning prodigal, and a reconciled, pardoned rebel; and the living God looks with infinite complacency and satisfaction on such a penitent believer; for if Christ be the Son of God, he could have no other object in view, in his sufferings and death, than to redeem man from the curse of the law, and reconcile us to God through the blood of the cross.

Hence the Christian derives his dignity—he feels himself to be a son of God—he looks beyond the veil of mortality. The humblest Christian is dignified, even in suffering, by the hope of future bliss:

For these light afflictions are but for a moment, and work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

No doctrine unites all the elements of grandeur and humility like *the truth as it is in Jesus.* It produces the highest degree of happiness and joy. They are not only of the highest degree, but permanent in their duration. It passes all understanding; for the hope of it is more glorious than the splendours of the universe.

It should induce us to unite with the people of God, for this truth binds the hearts of Christians together: *They are one in Christ.* It brings them together at innumerable points of contact. They are thus made one body; they are one in condition and circumstances. When driven together by a common storm, they fly to the same refuge. Were it not for this uniting tendency in the truth, Christianity would never have subdued the world. Its adherents, however numerous, could only have been *single* lights; and they would soon have been extinguished by the gusts and storms of this tempestuous world.

IV.

THE WISDOM OF GOD AS DISPLAYED IN THE GOSPEL.*

1 CORINTHIANS, ii., 6, 7: *Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught; but we speak the wisdom of* GOD *in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which* GOD *ordained before the world unto our glory.*

[Preached at Denmark Place Chapel, Camberwell, June 24, 1827, on behalf of the Bristol Baptist College.]

THOUGH the apostle had planted the cross, with considerable success, among the Corinthians, they suffered themselves to be subverted from the truth, and were involved in a variety of dangerous errors. They gave way to many gross immoralities; they fomented the spirit of party, despoiling the harmony and disfiguring the beauty of the Church. The apostle applies himself to counteract these various evils; and his success appears to have been nearly equal to his desires. To accomplish his important purpose, he reminds them that the wisdom connected with the doctrine of the cross was greatly superior to the wisdom of this world. Corinth was one of the principal schools of science: it was the custom of her philosophers and orators to embellish their statements with all the subtleties of argument, and the ornaments and graces of speech. But the apostle well knew that the arts of human learning and the embellishments of human rhetoric would but ill suit the simplicity of the gospel, and would rather go to make it of none effect. "I came not unto you," says he, "with ex-

* Reported in the Pulpit, vol. viii.

cellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. For my speech and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." The *reason* he assigns for so doing was, that their "faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Yet, lest any should suppose that the doctrine of Christ *crucified* was really that system of incoherence and folly which some, in *their* wisdom, pretended to show, he adds, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect"—among them who, having entered the school of Christ, have made some proficiency in the Divine system: "yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world"—not that wisdom in which the leading philosophers and rulers of the world are versed, and according to the maxims of which they act; "but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." You will observe that the apostle again and again declares the gospel to be the WISDOM of God. It is that system which is peculiarly marked by the wisdom of its great Author. Let us meditate on this glorious display of Divine wisdom. The wisdom of God, as displayed in the gospel, may be considered in three points of view: either in relation

To its great end;

To the medium through which it is communicated; or,

To the method in which it is announced.

First. IN RELATION TO ITS GREAT END.

The gospel may be considered as *glad tidings of good:* and in the nature of this good the wisdom of God eminently appears. He has set before us blessings such as never before entered into human apprehension. The good proposed to our view in the gospel is *the most suitable good.* Man is not merely corporeal; he is chiefly a spiritual creature; hence the gospel reveals a spiritual good. God, who well knows our nature, has adapted his gifts to the wants of our nature; he has, in his wisdom, regarded us as spiritual beings, who can only be sustained and satisfied with spiritual things. His wisdom appears, too, in that the good revealed in the gospel is *of a permanent kind.* God has formed us to endure forever, and the good which he has prepared for us is enduring also. Christ made himself known as eternal life. This is not the object of general regard; eternal life is not commonly pursued as a matter of unspeakable moment; and the wisdom of God appears in thus placing before us that good which we are most prone to forget—which most of all we need—and which will endure forever. God has manifested his wisdom also *in revealing himself to us as the chief, the only satisfying good.* He only can fill the powers of the soul—he only subsists through every changing scene. And God does graciously propose himself as the portion of his people. "Fear not," said he to Abraham; "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Who does not know that the creature cannot satisfy the creature? That which satisfies must be something

above us—something superior to us. Let us admire the wisdom of God in proposing such a good to us; and let us recollect that such a good as is proposed to us in the gospel is to be found nowhere else. View the gospel,

Secondly, IN RELATION TO THE MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH IT IS COMMUNICATED TO THE CHILDREN OF MEN.

The gospel is not only a certain good, but the medium of communicating that good: it reveals the good itself, and the various steps by which we are put in possession of that good. The economy which God has set on foot he himself exhibits. The mediation of Jesus Christ, his incarnation, and all the various facts narrated in his life, are parts of this economy. The salvation of the human race is made to turn on the death of an individual. This is above all the ideas of men: it never could enter the human mind to suppose that *one* man could be saved through the mediation of *many*, much less that *all* could be saved through the mediation of ONE. This was "a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks: but to them that were saved, it was Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." "We speak the wisdom of God *in a mystery*, even the *hidden* wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world, such as Pilate and Herod, and other great men, knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." But this fact, when properly considered, displays the highest wisdom. It is not an individual merely, but an individual made and fashioned expressly for the work. In the person of Christ, we see a man with a person capable of suffering; and a Divine person, to make his sufferings meritorious. In his one person, the Divine and human nature were mysteriously and hypostatically united. Hence his blood is precious, and worthy of having salvation ascribed to it by all the rational creation. Here is a display of *wisdom*. Had Christ been mere man, there could have been *no merit:* had he not been man, he could not have suffered. It was necessary that he should be man, and perfect in purity as a man, that God might discover in him no flaw; it was necessary that he should be dignified as well as innocent, or his sufferings could not have availed. In all the universe could no such individual be found; but in the union of the divine and human nature in the one person of Jesus Christ, "has been made known to the angels and principalities in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God." Had the question been asked, "How shall man be just with God?" it could not have been answered to eternity: but, "in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman—made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." He appeared in weakness *as a man;* but that weakness enabled him to suffer. He appeared as a *Divine person;* but as such he could not have suffered —he could not have died. Besides, the way to reconcile the holiness and the mercy, the justice and the love of God, could never have been conceived, but for the wisdom of God in fitting this man—this God-man, and sending him to suffer for the sins of the world.

God had sometimes been revealed in holiness, punishing his foes; and sometimes in mercy, "opening his hand, and satisfying the desire of every living thing:" but in the gospel alone do we see, *in one fact*, in one transaction, God shining forth alike in truth and holiness, in wisdom and in love. The cross of Christ became a mirror, in which to reflect back all the exuberance of the Divine mercy, and the purity of his holiness, and the riches of his grace. Here God appears just, and yet a justifier; just, and yet a Saviour. In saving the sinner by the cross of Christ, God does not for a moment lose sight of the Divine law, or at all diminish the evil of sin. The sinner, in obtaining salvation at the cross, does not lose sight of his true character. He can sink in the deepest self-abasement, while he rises to the enjoyment of the love of God. He can feel his own nothingness, at the same time that he exults in God as his Father. He can behold God as a righteous sovereign vindicating his authority, and yet dispensing pardons to those who have trampled on his authority. Nowhere else is the wisdom of God displayed as in this constitution of the gospel.

The wisdom appears in the gospel, farther, *in his defeating Satan by the very weapons which he employed to subvert his designs.* The cross is properly the WEAPON of Christ; the weapon by which he effected his grandest triumphs. "Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." On the cross, where Satan supposed his own victory to be complete, Jesus "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." *By the cross of Christ*, God has, as it were, reversed the order of things. In the first Adam, man fell, by aspiring to be as God: Jesus Christ, the second Adam, saves, by condescending to become man. Man was indebted for his ruin to an evil spirit; he owes his recovery to a good Spirit. Jesus Christ dispenses that Spirit to each believer; so that, as he was deluded and depraved by the suggestions of the wicked spirit, he is renewed and made holy by the influence of the Divine Spirit. As man was ensnared by deceit and vanity, and became miserable, he is liberated by truth and purity, and becomes happy. The machinery of Satan is thus turned upon himself; and, by a series of steps, reverse to those by which man fell, he is made to rise above all the consequences of his apostacy. The wisdom of God appears also,

Thirdly, IN THE DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL.

The truth, which was first dictated by Jesus Christ, was afterward declared and confirmed by them that heard him. In this was displayed the *wisdom* of God.

1. *It appears in the manner in which the truths of the gospel are taught.* There are two modes of communicating instruction: the one is *by facts;* the other is *by argument.* The latter mode is generally considered the most efficient, and was most commonly employed by the ancients in their schools of learning. They led their pupils by a concatenation of arguments, by a regular chain of reasoning, to the conclusion they wished to establish as truth. But many subtleties were resorted to in this mode of teaching. It was so possible for the

master to give what turn he pleased to the argument, that it was a very uncertain mode of teaching, and was by no means calculated for the instruction of mankind at large. Learning was clothed in such a garb, that it did not even attract the attention of the common people; they could not comprehend it; they could not be benefited by it. There was so much profundity about the teachings of the philosophers, that much acumen was required on the part of those who wished instruction. Their learning was elevated, and rarely reached down to the vale. The various sects of the philosophers, the Gnostics, the Aristotelians, and even that of the Pharisees and Sadducees, were among the higher classes: we never find that the people at large entered into their disputes, or bore the name of their sects. But when God designed to teach mankind, how did he proceed? He taught by *facts*—by testimony. "I came," says the apostle, "declaring unto you *the testimony* of God." Such were the facts the apostles asserted, that the truths they taught must stand or fall by those facts. They declared that Christ had appeared in the flesh; that he died; that he rose again. And these facts are the very soul of the gospel: he who believes that the apostles spake truth; that Jesus Christ really came, and died, and rose again, and ascended into the clouds of heaven, *must* also believe that he died for the salvation of sinners; that he "brought in an everlasting righteousness;" that he made a full atonement for sin; and the certainty of *our* rising, and appearing before God to give an account of ourselves, is as certain as the fact that Christ died and rose again. And he who considers the number of those witnesses, their character, the harmony of their testimony, the miracles they wrought in the name of Him of whom they testified, and, at the same time, refuses to believe their testimony, will be found neglecting his own salvation, and turning the gospel of the Saviour against himself. In all this the *wisdom* of God's teachings appears above the teachings of the philosophers. They retired from the crowd, and looked upon them with contempt; but heavenly wisdom is found "putting forth her voice by the way, in the places of the paths. She crieth unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. O ye simple, understand wisdom." The language of the gospel is addressed to all, and is founded upon facts that all may understand. It declares that *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: and it reveals a universal, an efficacious remedy. Its design is to bring man back to God; to reconcile him to the Being he has offended; to renew his soul in righteousness; to lead him in the way to glory, till at length he comes to the vision and enjoyment of God. And is not this a remedy? And is it not worthy the wisdom of God, to *reveal* such a remedy for the removal of mortal malady and disease? When Christ opened the eyes of the blind, and unstopped the ears of the deaf, and restored health to the sick, and raised the dead to life, he was only furnishing emblems of those *moral* miracles which were to be wrought on all those who embrace the gospel of salvation. But,

2. The *wisdom* of God appears also *in committing the dispensation of the gospel to men.* We might suppose that the designs of God

would be better accomplished by the ministry of *angels*. But it is evident that, if angels were to continue among us for the ministry of the gospel, that the reverence which we felt for them at first would soon cease; a familiarity as extreme as was our awe would succeed, and we should soon treat angels with the same contempt with which we now treat our fellow-men. Angels have been employed, on rare occasions, to "minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation;" but it has most frequently been on some such errand as that of the angel who liberated the apostles from prison, and said to them, "Go, stand and preach in the temple to the people all the words of this life." The ministry of the gospel is *wisely* committed *to men*. They can enter into the states of those whom they address; they can comfort those that mourn by the same consolations with which they have been comforted; they can have access to them at all times; they can handle with delicacy the diseases they witness; they can use the arts of persuasion and entreaty. Men are addressed by men for the same reason that the Redeemer assumed our nature; he was made "partaker of flesh and blood, that he might be touched with a feeling of our infirmities."

And not only was the dispensation of the gospel committed to men, but to men of *obscure station* and *mean talents*. We might have supposed that God would select the noble, the mighty, the learned, to make known the gospel of his grace. But, says the apostle, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are. That no flesh should glory in his presence." Had God employed the great and the wise to propagate his gospel, suspicions might have been raised in the minds of men that its success was to be ascribed to the elevated talent and station of its propagators. But when we see men without talent, or science, or rank, going forth and preaching the gospel, and, by their preaching, shutting up temples, dashing idols to the ground, and causing a new order of things to take place, we must admire the wisdom of God, and acknowledge that the success of such men could only be attributed to the grace of God which was in them. Their speech and their preaching was "not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." And the reason was obvious: it was that the faith of those who heard them "should stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." It was thus made evident that God was standing forth: God thus identified the cause as his own, and put his stamp on the exertions of his servants. And, in later ages, the same things have been seen. The greatest effects have been produced, more by *piety* than by talent. The cause is still entirely his. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water," but it is "God who giveth the increase." God will not *divide* his success with any human being.

All things are of him; and "let him that glorieth glory in the Lord."

These are some of the indications of Divine wisdom in the gospel. They have been set before you in a poor and imperfect manner, yet enough has been said to show you how the wisdom of God has been displayed in the gospel. Have you seen any thing of this wisdom? Have the elements of inquiry been stirred up within you? Do you feel your need of such a gospel? Are you constrained to cry, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?" You must either say, with a rapture greater than that of Archimedes, "We have found Him! We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write:" or determine never to rest till you have thus found Him, and are able to exclaim with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" Or, you must be destitute of Christ, and in a state of condemnation, hopelessness, and misery. Without Him, you have in you the elements of everlasting despair. "Behold, I bring you good tidings;" in Christ there is full and everlasting salvation. But there is no hope of mercy or of escape *out of Him:* every hope that is not founded upon Him will be cut off forever! Oh that many may be awakened to see this, and come to Him who alone can bless them! What can you enjoy if his anger be not turned away from you? Oh that you would seek to be reconciled to Him, and enjoy his approbation! If there be dignity, this is dignity; if there be happiness, this is happiness!

And if you are thus concerned for yourselves, you will feel concerned also for the diffusion of the gospel. You will be zealous for the support of those institutions whose object is to fit preachers for proclaiming the gospel of truth. There must be *piety* in the first place; and he whose heart is not purified by the grace of God, had better enter on any profession than that of preaching the gospel. But piety alone will not avail: a man must be able to investigate truth—to answer the arguments of gainsayers—and to silence objectors. He should know much of the structure of the human mind, that he may bring his arguments to bear, and bring the gospel into contact with that mind. He should have some knowledge of science in general, and of the state of society, and the world at large. He must have knowledge which the grace of God does not communicate, and which it was not designed to teach. It must be acquired from men of wisdom and piety.

Our denomination has been greatly behind in these respects. But I am happy to say that we are now fully aware of the importance of a learned ministry; and that all our people will soon feel this, in having an intelligent and pious ministry among them. And it ought to be so: some of the greatest intelligences have been on the side of Christ and the gospel. "In Jesus Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The religion of Jesus Christ is not inimical to the profession of human science; and if a man have genuine piety, he cannot have too much knowledge.

I call upon you to be benevolent on this occasion. Remember that he who thus giveth, offers a sacrifice which is well-pleasing to God;

and he who gives aright, will feel a reward in his own bosom, as well as receive a gracious reward hereafter. While we pray, day after day, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory to their children," we cannot act more consistently with our prayers than by doing all we can to assist in the means of "edifying the body of Christ: *till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*"

V.

GLORYING IN RELIGION.*

JEREMIAH, IX., 23, 24: *Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the* LORD, *which exercise loving kindness and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the* LORD.

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, September 28th, 1828.]

THE instruction that is here given is given by the Author of our being; it is the dictate, consequently, of infinite wisdom, and of the highest and most supreme authority. It is given by Him who knoweth the hearts and searcheth the reins of the children of men, who is acquainted with all their ways and all their designs, and knows what is reserved for them, through all the recesses of a boundless eternity. It is an instruction of the highest order; and, as such, every ear should be open, and every heart be obedient. From the decision of such a Being as this there is no appeal: His sentence must stand fast, His pleasure must be executed, and the final events of our future condition must be regulated according to the measures that are established by His eternal mind. When any portion of the word of God is read with solemnity, all who fear God will attach to it a great degree of importance, and will endeavour to bring it into the closest union with their hearts. This is the word which the Lord hath spoken: HE that formed the world, and will judge us at the last day, according to the rules of His eternal mind: He has taught us where to place our confidence, and whence to withdraw it. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me."

You all understand what is meant by *glorying;* it is an emotion of mind that speaks of exultation—self-satisfaction—self-approbation; which inspires confidence, and anticipates auspicious events in fu-

* Reported in the Pulpit, vol. xviii.

turity. It is nearly allied to that pride which dilates the countenances and extends the hearts of the children of men; and seldom is it safe to indulge this emotion, much less to let it become the continual emotion of our minds. It is a state of mind to which men are so liable, notwithstanding the sorrows and vicissitudes of the present life, on certain occasions, that the word of God has condescended to take it under its regulation, and to tell us on what objects it is lawful and just to indulge this emotion. It is not in the contemplation of wealth, strength, or wisdom; but it is in the contemplation of God—in the contemplation of the heart, brought into such a state as he requires—a state suited to his nature and character.

In these words there are three things which naturally suggest themselves to our attention:

First, That there is a disposition in man to glory and self-confidence, on account of personal accomplishments;

Secondly, That such glorying as this is founded upon a false basis, and is therefore unreasonable and improper; and, in the

Third place, another object is suggested to us, which will justify that glory and self-confidence, which ought not to be connected with the others.

I. In the *first* place, we are reminded that THERE IS A DISPOSITION IN MEN TO GLORY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE ON ACCOUNT OF THE PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS WHICH DISTINGUISH THEM IN THE EYES OF THEIR FELLOW-CREATURES. These accomplishments are seldom possessed without a degree of that emotion which is here described.

Bodily strength, for instance, is a source of great emulation and glory. It inspires the idea of great actions in its possessors, and frequently makes them arrogant and proud. It induces them to assume what does not belong to them, to violate the proprieties of life, and to carry about with them a spirit of defiance and insult in their intercourse with their fellow-creatures. Though now the effects of it, in consequence of the refinement of the upper classes, are principally confined to the lower classes of life, yet there we may contemplate its operation, and we shall see the effect it produces on things when the event of them is to be decided by acts of personal prowess and valour. The first and greatest painter of human manners and character represents his hero denying that laws were made for him; assuming every thing by force, speaking loudly of defiance, and inflamed by ungovernable pride. The effect of the progress of reason and mental culture, both in neighbourhoods and societies, has contributed to lessen the effect, and, consequently, to diminish the pride and glory resulting from capricious strength.

And, with respect to *worldly wisdom*, that which foresees consequences at a distance—that detects the weak part of systems—that discovers sophistry, where it lies in ambush—that provides for contingencies at great distance—and that wisdom which prevails in the councils of princes; you will perceive that this quality is eminently calculated to inspire glory in the hearts of its possessors. It inspires confidence more than that which is attached to the grosser qualities

of the human frame; and no men are more in danger of being wise in their own eyes than those who possess this quality; and nothing is more calculated to strengthen that high esteem of themselves which these qualities inspire.

With respect to the possession of *riches*, though it is adventitious—though it is not a quality of the mind or body—though it does not strictly belong to us or make any part of our nature, yet it has the most insidious influence in filling our minds with pride and presumption. A rich man generally treats his inferiors with contempt; he is frequently induced to break the laws of society, which he considers himself not under the necessity of obeying, on account of the superiority of his station. Nothing is so calculated to fill men with insufferable pride as the possession of extraordinary riches. It produces a semblance of homage or respect; it commands the services of mankind; it levies a contribution on all nature and society, and gives to those who possess it a sort of universal empire; and it is not at all to be wondered at that these minds are more tempted by pride and glory than those who seek to be distinguished by worldly wisdom.

II. Let us consider, in the next place, THE FALSE AND ERRONEOUS BASIS ON WHICH THESE SENTIMENTS OF GLORY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE ARE FOUNDED, as attested by him whose words cannot be mistaken, and who here directs the sentiment into another channel. There are three reasons why it is improper to indulge sentiments of glory and self-confidence:

1. In the first place, *neither separately taken, nor in their combined form, will they ever teach their possessors their true use; but they frequently turn to hurt, not only to society at large, but to their own possessors.* They are in the nature of an instrument, but an instrument requires a director; it requires the presence of a superior principle; and *these* are none of them of a nature to suggest their own proper application. Hence it arises, that where they exist alone, without any superior principle, they are frequently injurious to their possessors, as well as society at large. *Bodily strength*, for example: where is he who, chiefly distinguished by that possession, has ever been led to act a wise and virtuous part? Has it not, on the contrary, hurried him to the extremest danger, and led him to seek out annoyance to himself and others? Whereas, had he not this possession, he might have passed on his course peaceably and undisturbed. It sets at defiance the laws and decorum of society, and is as frequently the source of danger to the possessor as to those over whom its influence is exerted. With respect to *wisdom*, worldly policy is sometimes most injurious to those who possess it. Wise men are often entangled in the vastness of their own schemes; they are content with nothing but what is eccentric and new—they refine to such a degree as to deceive themselves; and depending too much on the experience and common observation of mankind, we find they are led to tread in dangerous paths. *Riches* are seldom the portion of superior minds. With respect to those very objects on which worldly policy is intent, a moderate degree of mental acquisition is generally considered more

favourable than a high degree of intellectual refinement and mental vigour. These are all instruments intended to make us occupy our place with advantage to our fellow-creatures. We are social creatures, and until we are actuated by that principle which renders these things beneficial to our fellow-creatures, they must be considered as totally lost. Riches are possessed to the injury of those who possess them, whenever they fill the heart with arrogance—whenever they lead to attempt injustice and oppression. And how frequently, where there is not the regulating principle of piety and virtue, is this found to be the case! They first corrupt the principles of the possessor, and then, by his conduct and example, diffuse the corruption far and wide. Instead of enlightening the understanding, they, for the most part, obscure it; instead of calming the passions and purifying the heart, they add fuel to the fires of concupiscence and lust, and eventually consume their victim. It is a great presumption to feel confidence in that which is of an equivocal nature—which may shed a noxious influence on all around—which may recoil on the head of the possessor; and which may cause the hand that might have enjoyed it in peace to become the weapon of hostility.

2. In the next place, *these things are utterly incapable, either separately or combined, of supplying some of the most pressing wants, and avoiding some of the most obvious evils to which our nature is exposed.* Strength, worldly wisdom, or riches, are totally inadequate to furnish any pledge of human happiness; and they provide not the least exemption from the evils to which we are exposed. They never, for a moment, can confer on us the approbation of our own minds; and, unless man approve himself, he never can enjoy the suffrage of his fellow-creatures. Applause can never be felt by any virtuous mind, unless it feels a consciousness that it deserves it; it is only on account of its tendency to do so that it furnishes any source of satisfaction to a virtuous mind; and, unless we have our own approbation, we must feel the applause of our fellow-creatures as an insult, and feel ourselves guilty of fraud and deception. Tranquillity of mind, especially in the prospect of futurity, can never be the portion of these endowments separately or combined; that peace of mind which passeth all understanding can never be the result of these qualities; on the contrary, they have a tendency to destroy it by engaging us in new schemes and enterprises, which continually occupy the mind. Nor did any man on his elevation to riches, or any distinction, ever arrive at such a condition as that he felt himself happy and able to look around him, and to reflect on the future or the past with composure and satisfaction. What protection is there in riches, strength, and wisdom of a worldly kind, against the attacks of enemies—against the complaints of discontent—against the perturbations of ungovernable passions—against the canker of corrupt principles? If the heart is not the seat of benevolence—if the possession be not accompanied with a sincere desire of doing good, self-contempt must ever accompany such a person. It is a very small portion of what men call happiness that can be culled from these endowments—they afford

an inadequate, an extremely inadequate supply of the most essential wants which belong to man as a thinking, reasonable, accountable creature.

But observe, in the *third* place, *that they are of a very transient duration and possession.* Some of them are extinguished in a moment. The least derangement of the nervous system may throw into desolation the most magnificent fabric of the human frame. And, with respect to riches, do they not make themselves wings, and leave their possessors behind? And it is likely that, if prudence were left to determine, the probability of success would not be equal to the probability of failure. But even suppose they could be carried forward to the end of life, how short is that period when compared to that vast duration which awaits us beyond it! Were we confined to the present world, religion has taught us the vanity of wealth and worldly riches on a thousand occasions. Poets and philosophers have made this the theme of their most frequent discussion and lamentation; but with the prospects of eternity before us, with an insight into another world, what can we think of the inadequacy of these endowments, which leave us at the threshold of mortality, which will afford no consolation in the dying hour, which we must leave when we step into eternity, and which have no sort of union or connexion with any of the enjoyments of the next world? You must have a consciousness that you must leave it at your dying hour; that the time is speedily coming when you must give an everlasting adieu to it, and depart into an unseen, an eternal world.

III. In the *next* place, let me briefly observe that this passage here suggests (and by the Divine being is the suggestion made) that THERE IS AN OBJECT WHICH IS OF SUCH A NATURE THAT IT WILL JUSTIFY THE GLORY, THE CONFIDENCE, THE SELF-SATISFACTION, WHICH IT IS DECLARED OUGHT NOT, FOR A MOMENT, TO BE CONNECTED WITH THOSE WHICH ARE BEFORE ENUMERATED. You ask on what we may glory, on what we may feel confidence? It is in this, that we know and understand the Lord, that we are acquainted with his character. To *know* the Lord, and *understand* the character of the Lord, is another expression for religion. It appears to be used in the Old Testament as an abridged expression for piety; thus it is said by the prophet, speaking of religion in the latter times, "That the time shall come when no man need say to his neighbour, Know thou the Lord; for *all shall know him.*" In the 22d chapter of the same prophecies, and the 16th verse, it is said, speaking of a former king of Israel, "He judged the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well with him; was not this *to know me*, saith the Lord?" We are informed of a period when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters fill the sea. And the Apostle Paul justifies the same application of the expression; for he, speaking of the impiety of some of the professors of Christianity at Corinth, says, "Ye have not *the knowledge of God;* I speak this to your shame;" and "after that *ye knew God,*" saith the apostle, which is another expression for their conversion. The expression, to know God, is used to denote, not merely

an acquaintance with His character, but a suitable state of mind towards Him; the terms *see* and *know* denote their appropriate affections; they indicate the state of the heart. To know God is to feel affected towards him in a manner suited to His character, to be submissive to His government, willing to be dealt with by His administration, to be in subjection to His authority, to yield obedience to His will. It is, in fact, another expression for that religion which unites the heart of the creature to the Creator. Now this, the prophet tells us, is a ground of boasting. The principles of true religion supply the deficiencies that belong to the former acquisitions, and what is denied to those is with the greatest propriety transferred to true religion.

In the *first* place, *true religion will teach us the proper regulation and employment of all these endowments.* The principle of piety will instruct us how to use our *strength;* not to make it a vain boast, but to employ it in the service of our day and generation. It will enable us to lend our bodily energies to the service of that Being who created our mortal frame; it will lay an arrest on all the abuses of physical power, and direct it entirely into the channel of useful and beneficent action. With respect to *wisdom*, the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; it makes no shelter for the greatest dangers; it shuts its eyes against the most impending scenes; it is blind to eternity. And with respect to the wisdom of this world, it never opens its eyes to take in the wisdom of God. By forgetting God's administration, by seeking to be happy independent of him, by building for perpetuity on the sand with materials of a perishable nature, by shining for a time with a light that death will extinguish—this is foolishness with God. And with respect to *riches*, all the great ends of prosperity will be laid at the foot of the cross, and will serve to honour him for whose pleasure and service they are created. There is no principle which can direct the energies of the immortal mind like this—no principle can turn them to their proper objects except the principle of true religion; it lays an arrest on all that is calculated to disturb the beneficial operations of our powers of mind or body. This is wanting in all the schemes of human wisdom, in all the enterprises of human skill; in all the *strength*, *riches*, and *wisdom* of this present world, not an ingredient of this principle is to be found—not an ingredient of this safe-conducting principle can be found except in the knowledge of God and true religion.

2. In the next place, *there is a perpetuity and pledge of future and eternal felicity in the religion of Jesus Christ;* not only that which produces present tranquillity and peace, but that which furnishes the pledge of an enduring and eternal happiness. The Christian knows that whatever he wants, it is better to want than possess; whatever he waits for, it is better to wait for than to have immediately put into his possession. He is assured that he is under the conduct of infinite wisdom; his own righteousness he considers as a feeble light, which is forced to be renewed from above. Loving God's administration, and having their hearts attached to His throne, Christians move forward in perfect harmony with the great Mover, and are carried forward

through all the revolutions of time and eternity with the most beneficial operation; for he declares "that all things work together for good to them that love God." The Christian looks around at the power which controls all worlds, from whom no result is hidden, and reflects that no event can take place but in consequence of His holy permission. This one principle of knowing the Lord, understanding the moral principles of his government, approving of his administration, and being willing that he should govern us, arms the mind as with brass. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even forever." No arm of flesh can injure us if God be on our side. And when we come to die, and enter into another state of being, then that gracious God, who has provided for the exigencies and necessities of that condition, will open to us sources of knowledge and enjoyment altogether different from what we ever saw or heard. Revelation has cast a faint light on it, but "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But that world will be a world of eternal duration, enlightened by the glory of God, filled continually with his presence, and pervaded by his enjoyments; and his worship and service will be engaged in by an innumerable multitude of every nation and every tongue, and the elect of his people out of all the earth. In that world nothing can arise which the religion now revealed does not provide for, no enjoyment for which it has not a direct qualification. It fits and provides for the eternal state, by bringing us under the guidance of the great Author of Divine revelation; it qualifies and makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; it prepares its possessors for living and reigning with Christ as kings and priests. Here is a ground for glory and boasting. The Christian can never stretch his view too far, or go beyond the limits of his inheritance; it loses itself in the recesses of a boundless eternity.

But, my dear brethren, since this is consistent with the true sayings of God—since this is the instruction of him that made you, let me sincerely request, especially the *younger* part of you, to pay to it the most profound attention. Let me remind you that God will judge the world in righteousness according to the maxims and principles found in this passage. None will appear with confidence before him at the last day, none will see the face of God to their joy, who renounce not all their self-confidence; none can approach him who have not first approached the fountain of propitiation and sacrifice; none but those who, through faith in Christ, have made their peace with God. They only who have known him as a reconciled God in Christ Jesus, who have undergone the process of sanctifying and transforming grace, these only are now the children of God, these only will be manifest as such in the presence of the assembled world; they only will be the heirs of God. Young men, place no confidence in your *strength*; you may be withered in a moment; a fit of disease may blast you forever; the cheek that now glows with health may be faded in an instant, and the voice of the Divine Being will be heard saying to

you, "Return, ye children of men," and you must return. And you who possess *riches*, place no confidence in your riches; be rich in good works, be ready to communicate, be ready to distribute, treasure up for yourselves a good foundation for the time to come, lay hold on eternal life, and take care that the riches you now possess are not your supreme riches, but lay them as spoils on the altar of Christ and religion. And if there be any in the presence of God who are eminent for *worldly policy* and *wisdom*, let them not walk in self-satisfaction, nor place confidence in themselves on that account. If you be wise in the great schemes of human emulation and advantage, and, at the same time, are not prepared for eternity, you will sink never to rise again. Your wisdom will be esteemed as the most elaborate folly, and God and angels will exult over your ruin to all eternity. These things are not unknown to us: they are familiar to all, they float on the very surface of religion. Let us be wise, and consider our latter end; let us seek henceforth the things that are above; let us renounce the world; let us follow Christ wherever we go; let us take the Scriptures, considering them as a guide and help, regulating all our sentiments by them; and, like children, let us sit at the feet of Christ, and learn his words, for they are the words of eternal life.

VI.

THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS.*

JOSHUA, xxi., 45.—*There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, October 29, 1828.]

THIS is the testimony which Joshua, or some pious person who closes the account which Joshua is supposed to have given of the conquest of Canaan, bears; by which he drew the attention of the people of God to his faithfulness in fulfilling his engagements and verifying his promises. Great difficulties attended the conducting of the children of Israel to the land of Canaan—difficulties of a moral as well as of a natural description—difficulties arising from the perverseness of their conduct, which rendered it necessary for the Divine Being from time to time to cut them off—and difficulties arising from the circumstances in which they were placed; their utter inability to combat or cope with their enemies, and the mighty obstructions that lay in their way in the wilderness, but especially when they arrived in the promised land. Yet through all these difficulties the hand of God was pleased to conduct them; they were carried triumphantly through them, and brought to that promised land which occasioned this permanent record of Divine faithfulness and truth. The words of the

* Reported in the Pulpit, vol. xx.

text are very strong: "*There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass.*" Not any one circumstance, not any one part of any good thing which he had uttered respecting them was suffered to fall to the ground, but all came to pass.

These words may be considered in three points of view:

First. As expressive of the faithfulness of God in his engagements to his ancient Israel, with a view particularly to that great dispensation which was in the contemplation of the writers of this book.

Secondly. As expressive of the faithfulness of God to his Church collectively in subsequent engagements.

Thirdly. As expressive of the faithfulness of God to individual believers.

1. Persons who glance at the application of this passage will perceive particularly, in the first place, that it was intended to record THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN ACCOMPLISHING HIS ENGAGEMENTS TOWARDS THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL.

Israel was at that time the true Church of God, comprehending, we have reason to suppose, the far greater part of his servants and worshippers. In that view it was the standing type of the true Church of God, though in subsequent ages it was not so. There is a great variety of particulars occurring to illustrate the fidelity, power, and veracity of God, in bringing to effect his revealed purposes respecting that people. Their deliverance out of Egypt was the effect of a high hand and merciful heart. It was a great and memorable night when the Divine Being slew the first-born of Egypt, and filled most of the great families of that empire with terror and dismay, so that they prayed Pharaoh that Israel might be allowed to depart. In conducting them to the land of Canaan, great and formidable impediments occurred; and nothing but his faithfulness and his adherence to the promise he made to Abraham, confirmed by an oath to Isaac and Jacob, arrested his hand and stayed his judgments when they murmured in the wilderness. And when they entered into Canaan, instead of having the quiet, peaceable possession, he engaged them in warfare for seven years; for such was the infatuation of the inhabitants of Canaan, that, though they had witnessed the judgments of God on Canaan; though they had witnessed his judgments on Egypt; though they had witnessed his providential interposition on behalf of the sacred tribes in the wilderness, yet their hearts were hardened, and there was but one nation only who submitted themselves to the arms of the Israelites.

Notwithstanding these great impediments, Joshua, or, at least, those who survived him, had an opportunity of attesting, from an accurate observation of events, that all that the Divine Being had uttered respecting Israel had come to pass. He had assured Abraham that he should possess the land of Canaan; but God multiplied his seed as the stars of heaven, and, in the persons of that seed, he possessed the land of Canaan. After that time he was pleased to give them only a temporary possession; and they will, I have no doubt, be restored to

it again; though the possession of it is in a state of abeyance, yet the Divine Being will reinstate them in the land of promise as their own peculiar possession. He not only gave them Canaan, but he verified his promise with respect to the precedent step by which that promise was accomplished. "Their hearts melted, neither was their spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel;" every enemy fled; and not only so, but he gave them rest; they had their enemies so completely under subjection, that, though they were not all destroyed, yet none dared to oppose them, and they dwelt in peace and security in the midst of the most raging foes. They had continuing with them the tokens of his special presence; his ark still resided among them; this supernatural token was with them from generation to generation, and it was not till they transgressed, by a series of rebellions, that the current of the Divine mercy was restrained.

We see in all this how the Divine Being is pleased to accomplish his purposes, notwithstanding the most direct and unfavourable appearances. Several centuries had elapsed between the promise made to Abraham and the accomplishment of it. During that time the promise did not sleep, and at the very time when it was predicted that the children of Israel should come forth out of Egypt, at that very time their armies came forth. The great instrument of their deliverance, Moses, was removed, yet the Divine Being showed that his hand was not shortened; the Lord gave them Joshua, by whose means he accomplished the work which Moses was not permitted to conclude, and secured to them the land of Canaan.

II. In the next place, this may be considered as expressive of THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO HIS CHURCH COLLECTIVELY, in subsequent engagements.

The great promise which God here gives to his Church, and which is perpetuated and renewed in the New Testament, is that of his special presence—of such a presence as shall secure for it all possible good, and overrule all apparent evil. The promise of God to his ancient Church is diffused over many pages of the Old Testament prophecies, and, with respect to the New Testament, I need not remind you of the great promises on which the apostles were sent forth to preach the gospel: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."—"Wherever two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." These promises were accomplished in a marvellous manner by the hand of the Lord being with the apostles, when they gave testimony to his grace at the first preaching of the gospel. In a very short time the whole of Judea was filled with their doctrines; the number of disciples multiplied; even the priests themselves and a great multitude of the people became obedient to the faith. Though the rulers of Judea stood up, and the heathen priests lent themselves to persecute the Church, and though the people raged, yet the Lord set his King on his holy hill of Zion, and by means apparently weak the greatest triumphs were achieved. He went on conquering and to conquer.

The presence of God in his Church is particularly verified in his

faithfulness to it: "This is my covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Now, though many attempts were made in the early and latter ages to destroy the truth of God by destroying the Scriptures, and by corrupting the doctrines of Christianity through heresies and false teachers, yet the promise of God has been abundantly accomplished. When the enemies of religion have attempted to sap the foundations of Christianity, and to darken the faith once delivered to the saints by pernicious errors, the presence of the Divine Being has appeared in a very marvellous manner. In the beginning of the fourth century an attempt was made to pervert the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; and, if it had not been for Athanasius, there was reason to believe that the truth of God would have gone from the earth, for there was scarcely a single defender of it. But the Divine Being was pleased to raise up that immortal man, and, by the energy he communicated to him, the truth was rescued from error, and was reasserted, and became victorious. When the Church of God was in danger of being overwhelmed by papal superstition, by the idolatry that succeeded to the pagan idolatry, in what a marvellous manner did the Divine Being preserve a seed to serve him! There never wanted a multitude of his sincere worshippers; the hand of persecution was never permitted to prevail in such a manner as entirely to extinguish the lights of the world. Many continued to prophesy in sackcloth till the Reformation, when the Divine Being gave the word, and great was the number of those who published it. How great was the power of the Divine Being! They not only preserved sincere worship when the corruptions of the Church of Rome were at their highest, but before the time of the Reformation there was an increasing number of persons who lifted up their standards on the side of truth—who protested against the corruption of that Church—and who sealed their testimony with their blood.

Again, how wonderful have been the interpositions of Divine Providence in this our own country! Who does not recollect the attempt made to destroy the heads of the nation—to destroy at once the whole fabric of Christianity? And if God had not risen by the Revolution, popery, no doubt, would have been prevalent, and the persecutions would have been equal to those which attended the first promulgation of Christianity. How wonderful has the Divine Being appeared within the last few years! Who does not recollect how triumphant was the language of infidelity, how loud was the expression of exploding Christianity? and yet, at that very time, when they were in the very highest of their strength, and spreading their publications so as to darken Europe, the Divine Being was pleased to raise up a counteracting tendency in the spread of the Scriptures, to give it an esteem such as it never possessed before. And in consequence of this di-

vine operation in the hand of the Divine Spirit, infidelity has received a more severe defeat than it had previously suffered for more than fifty years; and, where infidelity reigned triumphant at the time that society first commenced its operations, not one is now known to defend the unhallowed cause.

Now is there any thing to fear for the faith once delivered to the saints? Is there any cause to fear that the Church will be overwhelmed by the attacks on Christianity? We see, with great degrees of confidence, that in no preceding period was the word of God ever so triumphant; it never mounted so from the earth; it never gave more striking proof that it was not produced to be resigned to everlasting contempt and derision. And at the present moment I may add, with respect to the insidious attempts to corrupt Christianity by the diffusion of error, by opposing and subverting the great and vital doctrines of the gospel, never was there such a harmony and consent in good men in opposition to these—never was such a consentaneous testimony borne, and such a clear hold had of the great doctrines of Christianity—and never was there so great a concentration of effort and feeling on the part of those who appeared to be zealous for Christianity, for contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. If we read ecclesiastical history, if we trace the progress of events, we see the goodness of the Lord in sustaining the Church in these things: "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

III. In the third place, let us for a moment turn our attention to this declaration as expressive of THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN HIS ENGAGEMENTS TO INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS.

And here, my brethren, we must appeal to the experience of every particular Christian for the confirmation of this part of divine truth. I believe there is no person experiencing the power of religion who has not had an increasing evidence of the faithfulness of God in verifying his promises, on which he has caused him to hope. He has found—notwithstanding the dark appearances of Divine Providence—he has found that sort of satisfaction which he was taught to expect from the exercise of faith and confidence in Jesus Christ, and obedience to him. He has found, in seasons of pain and difficulty, that kind of assistance on which he was taught to rely. He has found that he has had in his own mind those feelings of the Spirit, which afforded to him, in his darkest moments, a pleasing confidence that he should at last ultimately be put in possession of eternal glory. They are none of the servants of God who carry about with them no experimental evidences of the favour of God. They were taught that if they came to Jesus Christ, they would find rest to their souls; he holds himself out to them in the gospel as a covert from the tempest, and as a shadow for the weary in a strange land. They found that peace which the world can never give or receive. In the world our Saviour taught them to expect tribulation, but he assured them, at the same time, that they should have peace in him. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And he assured them that, by

the diffusion of the same temper, and participation of the same Spirit, they should always become conquerors.

And have you not found it so in your past experience? Have you not found that, when the enemy came in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up the standard against him? Are there not many who can say, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us?" Your extremities have been his opportunities. Have you not recorded examples of divine interposition of a spiritual nature in your favour, such as the men of the world know little of, such as your own breast is conscious of? Every Christian, in proportion as he walks closely with God, acquires a knowledge of the ways of God, and learns more and more of the mysteries of his dealings with him, and learns deeper and deeper the truth of his promises. "If the Lord had not been on our side, then had the waters covered us, then had the streams gone over our souls."—"Blessed be the God of Israel, that he hath not given us up a prey."

How often have you had your feet taken from the miry clay, and a new song put into your mouth, even the song of Moses and the Lamb! How often has the Divine Being shone on you! Sometimes you have been ready to take up the lamentation, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" and you were surprised to find that so much dejection, distress, and sorrow should be superseded by such sudden appearances of Divine favour and love, and that he has turned your captivity into rejoicing. You were as the streams of the south, you were as those who slept.

The faithfulness of God in performing his promises at present, must, however, be in a great degree obscured by the darkness of our present state; for every thing is in perpetual motion. No one can understand the nature of a beautiful building in the rubbish, or while it is actually rising, in the midst of the complicated instruments used in its erection, but we must wait till it is finished before we can form a just estimate of its beauty. Thus it is with the works of God; we are frequently left in the dark, and are ready to say of many occurrences—these are all against us; we are ready to write bitter things against ourselves, and to imagine that all is lost; but wait the issue: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." The ways of the Deity are past finding out; yet wait for him, he is a God of judgment; therefore wait for him.

And, my brethren, with respect to that great hope of which the possession of Canaan was but a shadow and figure—the possession of the heavenly inheritance—in a very short time every real believer will be able to put his seal to the truth of the Divine promise. Jesus Christ declared that he gave his sheep eternal life, and none should pluck them out of his hand. Then, when the chosen tribes of Israel shall arrive at the land of promise, and shall be gathered together in the presence of the Great Shepherd, and be placed at his right hand, when all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes, then will the faithfulness of God shine forth; then will it appear the most illustrious part of his character, that he is a covenant-keeping God; that, as

he swore to Noah that the waters should no more go over the earth, so hath he sworn that he would no more be wroth and rebuke his people. "The mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my covenant shall not fail." The faithfulness of God with respect to his completing his promises in giving eternal life to his people is not a matter of experience—it cannot be in the present world; but, if we believe Christianity, we believe this—that, when Jesus Christ appears the second time, all that are dead in Christ shall appear with him, and shall be caught up together and meet him in the clouds, and thus shall they be forever with the Lord. If he has fulfilled one hundred of his promises—if the course of his providence has corresponded with the expectation excited by the word of promise, then we believe that that faithfulness will not fail us; that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; that he who has filled our minds with expectation will not disappoint us with respect to this great hope. Let us, therefore, lift up our heads, if we are real Christians, for the day of our redemption draweth nigh. Let us rejoice that we have a covenant of God, and a covenant ordered in all things and sure, which is all our salvation and all our desire.

And, in the first place, by way of improvement, let us observe the propriety of remembering the way in which the Lord God hath led us. Israel is called on to look back and to compare the conduct of God's Providence towards them with the promise he had uttered long before; and the exercise of tracing the dealings of God enabled them to rely upon that faithfulness and truth, to which their attention is here directed. We all see much of the consolation which we might derive to our own souls if we did only meditate on the way the Lord hath led us. If we consider the trials and sorrows of the present life as a part of that holy dispensation, in that proportion shall we be disposed to glorify God. If we trace the hand of man in these events, this may produce disquietude; but if we could extend our view to the farthest limit, all this would frequently be matter of gratitude, and we should be enabled to give thanks to God in every thing. Let every one who has made a profession of Christianity trace the conduct of God towards him since that profession commenced. As spiritual Christians, formed in Christ Jesus to show forth his praise, if they mark the conduct of God, they will perceive the faithfulness and truth in it which will attach them to his character and stimulate them to revere his ways. Let us look forward to that state in which we shall have his kindness fully displayed. If the grand assurance which Jesus Christ has given to his disciples is fulfilled, how happy shall we shortly be—happy, if we are his; with what delight shall we then look back on the way he has led us! How sweet it will be to retrace the mysterious operations of his providence—the wonderful way in which God hath brought us all the journey through; all the trials and afflictions of this life so tempered and overruled that none could be spared, none could be wanting; they are all a part of the Divine mercy towards us. and not only do they not obstruct our felicity, but in the hand of the Great Disposer they are made subservient to pro-

moting it. "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

And while common salvation produces a common song of praise, millions of glorious spirits will each have a separate song, each a separate theme—each one will have within him motives of gratitude which are peculiar to himself, and will not cease to wonder that he should be brought thither—that he should be singled out as a brand from the burning. Eternity will never cease to exhibit fresh occasions of wonder that he should be brought from danger and distress, and made an heir with God and joint-heir with Christ. It will be said by every adoring soul, Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning? Let us, my dear brethren, endeavour to anticipate that prospect. Let us place ourselves by faith where we shall shortly be placed. Let us walk, as it were, in the suburbs of that heavenly city, and endeavour to anticipate something of its spirit and enjoyment. Then shall we be "strong in the Lord and the power of his might." The joy of the Lord will be our strength, and our only stay and support; the spirit of consolation will alleviate the weight of our afflictions—will make the paths of the Divine Being unspeakably delightful, ways of pleasantness and paths of peace.

VII.

DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE.*

PSALM cvii., 7: *And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, April 19th, 1828.]

THE design of this Psalm is to invite us to meditate on God's providential dispensations for our own benefit, and the Psalmist concludes this chapter with this remark: "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." The angel, speaking to the Prophet Daniel of the mystery of Divine Providence, says, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." We have here, in this Psalm, the history of the children of Israel in their passage through the wilderness into the land of Canaan. It is intended for reproof, conviction, and instruction in righteousness; and to be a representation of the conduct which God observes towards his servants now; for we have the authority of the apostle in this application to the present times, who says, "These things happened for our ensamples, upon whom the ends of the world are come." We are, therefore, deeply concerned in the conduct of Divine Providence towards the

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

Israelites, it being, like a mirror, continually presenting the object to our view, and for our benefit.

1st. What was the right way in which the Lord led his people, or what are we to understand by it?

2dly. Observe that, notwithstanding appearances were so dark and mysterious, it was the *right* way.

First. One of the most striking features of the journey was, that it was extremely circuitous. There was a direct way from Egypt to Canaan, "the land flowing with milk and honey," in a straight line for them to take possession of it, through Seir from Goshen, but they were commanded to turn and go through the wilderness of Paran. We find they frequently retraced their steps, wandering about, and visiting the same places for forty years. This is an instructive lesson and figure to the spiritual Israel. They have the promise of a future land, a place of rest, a city of habitation; and instead of being conducted immediately there, they are ordered to wander about in this wilderness state. The Lord evidently intends them not to look to the present world as a state of rest; for He exercises their patience by many trials; they have, therefore, need of faith to overcome the world, and to establish their hearts in waiting. He can secure his purpose without making haste. He has no occasion to take quick measures; and he that "believeth shall not make haste."

We often find that, as soon as persons are converted to God, they imagine their trials are all over, and that they shall have nothing but peace and joy; but they soon experience greater trials and afflictions than ever entered into their conception. The children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt, instead of entering into the Holy Land, passed through the wilderness. Thus the excellent of the earth are often conducted into the wilderness. The Israelites went not into an inferior country merely, but they passed through "that great and terrible wilderness by the way of the mountain of the Amorites." "They wandered in a solitary way; hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted in them; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses."

There were many intricacies, many privations, and "but for the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night," they would have lost their way. Thus it is with the children of God. There are great intricacies in the journey of life, and many privations, but they have a constant communication of Divine wisdom to guide them, if they supplicate for it. Hence the Psalmist prays, "Make plain the path of my feet because of mine enemies." If left to ourselves, we should fall by the right hand and by the left; but He has promised to guide us by his counsel, and to lead us by the way we should go. "The Lord God is a sun and shield, He will give grace and glory;" He will supply wisdom for direction, in answer to prayer. "Commit thy way unto the Lord." "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding." "I know," says the Prophet Jeremiah, "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Although the spiritual Israel have not a miraculous direction, they have

a real one; it is the path of duty, the path of safety, and of happiness. The Israelites were fed with manna, by a Divine and supernatural production; thus the people of God are conducted through the world: they have many natural and spiritual enemies to combat, and many privations to endure, yet they are sustained, in a supernatural manner, by the Word of God and by the Spirit. They are nourished by the Word and ordinances, and sustained by the Spirit.

Thirdly. The Israelites were also called upon to encounter great and serious conflicts. They had many enemies to contend with: there were the Amalekites, the Amorites, and Moabites, and "Og, king of Bashan, who went out against them, he and all his people." Thus it is with the people of God; they have not only to travel, but to fight. They have enemies to obstruct them, their spiritual enemies from within and without, the interests of a sordid world, and the allurements of pleasure. They are called "to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." The state of a Christian here is a militant state; there are enemies in himself, and there is Satan, his great adversary. He wrestles not with flesh and blood only, but "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." I would appeal to the Christian's experience. He finds himself continually harassed by a set of enemies of a new kind. Satan will inject his fiery darts of temptation; sometimes he will appear as an angel of light, at others as a roaring lion, and he will never suffer a Christian to rest till he arrives at the conquered land: but our Saviour says, for his encouragement, "Him that overcometh I will give to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."

He that knows nothing of this spiritual warfare, knows nothing of the Christian life or of the mind of Christ. The Saviour says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head, and he was to bruise his heel. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated." The people of Israel were not only accustomed to conflicts, but they were exercised by various trials and chastisements, owing to the latent depravity and infidelity of their hearts; and their greatest trials were the fruit of their own perverseness. It is said, in the book of Deuteronomy, 8th chapter and 5th verse, "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." Those, my brethren, who are not sharers in these chastisements are said, by the apostle, to be bastards, and not sons; "for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Our greatest trials are often brought on us from a just animadversion of our faults; had we been more faithful, more humble, and obedient, they would have had no place.

Secondly. Notwithstanding these features in relation to ancient Israel, and the conduct of God to his Church, it is yet "the *right way* to a city of habitation." He was their guide; He went before them,

marking out and directing their marches and encampments, all by a right way, as most conducive to his own glory, and the happiness of those that were dear to Himself. Thus the people of God have the promises of his spiritual presence: "I will guide thee with mine eye; fear not, I am with thee;" and He assures us that "all things shall work together for good," if we love Him, and our hearts are steadfast to his covenant. Of Israel He said, "Is not my way equal; are not your ways unequal?" His ways are equitable, and worthy of Himself. The consideration of *whose* ways they are ought to silence every doubt or murmuring thought, especially when we reflect that He is infinite in power, infinite in goodness and in mercy. We ought, therefore, to exercise our unlimited trust in his guidance, where we cannot trace his footsteps; for if we cannot rely upon Him in the dark, and infer from his known character that all his ways are wisdom, and truth, and faithfulness, we shall remain without the consolations of piety. Even as to an earthly parent, a child is confident of his father's love in the midst of discipline; and so, in the Divine Being, his chastisements should be submitted to, from a distinct perception of his love to his children. We should argue from his perfections with which we are acquainted, and from the testimony of his word, that all his dealings must be right and good; that in the best sense, "whatever is, is right," although at the time they may not seem most for our good. Afflictions, for the present, are not joyous, but grievous; yet afterward they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Again: The Israelites of old are represented as under a moral discipline. They were perverse, disobedient, and rebellious; they had an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; and it may be doubted whether any less discipline and trials would have fitted them for the Holy Land. Our present trials, bereavements, and afflictions are the chastisements of our heavenly Father, "for whom he loveth he chasteneth." Our undue attachment to the world, the desire to have our own way, and an over-value of present objects, demand these severe trials for our moral improvement, and for our advancement in holiness.

Secondly. We may learn that the time will arrive when the Divine conduct will afford matter of praise and thanksgiving, however it might have staggered his people here below, and induced them, as Jacob did, to say, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me," yet they proved all for him. The crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ appeared to be a decisive blow to the expectations of the disciples: "We thought it had been He that should have redeemed Israel," said his disciples. They knew not that *he had* redeemed them. Those trials, my brethren, which Christians have found to be most difficult to reconcile with the loving kindness of their heavenly Father, they have often, even in this life, had reason to bless God for. They have drank the cup, and felt its purifying effects, and have said with the Psalmist, "Before I was afflicted I went astray;" and have exclaimed, with holy Job,

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." What, then, my brethren, may we expect will be our feelings of joy when we come to stand on Mount Zion above with Jesus Christ; when we shall sing the song, with all the redeemed, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!" and "to him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father," and we shall reign with him forever? Then will light, indeed, break in out of darkness, and our afflictions will become occasions of the most ardent gratitude. We shall then find that all the way in which the Lord our God hath led us was "the right way to a city of habitation." Keep, my dear brethren, the path of duty, and he will support you in it. In all your path walk closely with God. "Acknowledge him," and then nothing is to be dreaded. Cultivate more communion and fellowship with him, and soon, very soon, the sorrows of this world will be commuted into joy, for "in his light shall we see light." And it will give us infinite pleasure to look back from that elevated spot on Mount Zion, when we become "pillars in his temple, never more to go out;" when we shall be satisfied, awaking in his likeness, and shall spend a blessed eternity in worshipping Him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb, forever and ever. Amen.

VIII.

THE PROPHECY OF JACOB RESPECTING SHILOH.*

GENESIS, xlix., 10: *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and to him shall the gathering of the people be.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, August 10, 1828.]

THE Holy Spirit inspired the ancient saints especially in their dying hours; and whether it be that the solemnity of the scene enhances the impression, or that the effect of dying words is greater, what has been uttered under such circumstances has been usually received and retained with peculiar reverence, and at times adopted by others on similar occasions. A striking resemblance may be observed between the prophecies of Jacob, recorded in the chapter which contains the text, and the predictions of Moses respecting the destinies of the several tribes, as recorded in the close of Deuteronomy.

I. It will be proper, first, to consider the prophecy and its fulfilment. Until the period at which it was delivered, the nation of Israel was not divided into tribes; but from this period it was always so divided. The prophecy asserts that the sceptre should not depart from the tribe of Judah until a personage here denominated Shiloh should appear.

* From the notes of Rev. T. Grinfield.

1. What we are to understand by the term "sceptre," as here employed, is the whole question: whether it relates to regal authority, as some suppose. This appears improbable: for, in the first place, the regal sceptre was not specially placed in the tribe of Judah, and could not be said to depart from that tribe more than another: secondly, Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin, not of Judah; neither were the Maccabeans of Judah's tribe. "Sceptre" here denotes a staff of office; each tribe had its rod of power, and the meaning is, that the authority of a tribe should remain in Judah until the period specified should arrive.

After the three captivities, the ten tribes, which had been separated from those of Judah and Benjamin in the reign of Rehoboam, were lost and blended among the nations. But Judah and Benjamin, thenceforward regarded as one tribe, still possessed its rod of authority; and hence the name of Jew, derived from Judah, was used to mark the whole nation. Judah remained as a separate people during the captivity at Babylon.

2. The term "lawgiver" must be limited in its interpretation by the term "sceptre." While there was one supreme lawgiver in Israel, "the rulers of Israel" are frequently mentioned in the New Testament. Within forty years after the death of Christ, the sceptre, the lawgiver, did depart; since that period, every trace of political power has departed from Judah, and yet has it remained separate from all the nations.*

3. Concerning the meaning of the term "Shiloh," which occurs only in the text, various opinions have been proposed: the most probable is that it denotes the Peacemaker; Jesus Christ, who came (as the angels celebrated His nativity) to give "peace on earth;" or, as others think, it may mark Him as "sent," and thus be taken as the same word with "Siloam," which the evangelist interprets as "sent." He continually spoke of Himself as one whom God had "sent." But the former appears to me the better meaning. Jews and Christians unanimously apply the term "Shiloh" to the Messiah.

4. The prophecy proceeds to state that "to Him shall the gathering of the people be;" words which express the dependance of faith, the allegiance of hope, which would centre in the promised Lord of all: Jesus Christ is the bond of a new society on earth! The word "people" is never used in the prophecies to mean the Jews, but always the Gentiles, whose accession to the Church of Christ is thus announced in the text. By the Jews, of course, this interpretation is not admitted; but we ask, with Paul, "Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles?" Many passages of prophecy, as you are aware, confirm this interpretation. The Father, addressing the Mes-

* "The sense is, that, till the Messiah came, there should be in the tribe of Judah either a king, a sceptre-bearer, as there was unto the captivity; or a governor, though under others, as there was unto the time of Christ, such as Gedaliah, Zorobabel, and more particularly the Sanhedrim, a court of judicature, the prince of which was always of the tribe of Judah ('Judah is my lawgiver'), and which retained its power to the latter end of Herod's reign, when Christ was come; but, quickly after the death of Christ, it had none left."—Dr. Gill's *Exposition*.

The expression "from between his feet" is a Hebraism, equivalent with "from his offspring."—Grinfield.

siah, says, "I will give thee for a covenant to the Gentiles, for a Leader and Commander to the people:" addressing the Church, he says, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come; and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and their kings to the brightness of thy rising." Accordingly, the Gentile nations flocked to the standard of the cross, uplifted by the apostles, and cast away their idols to the moles and bats. Jesus Christ found little success in His own nation; His words, as uttered by His Spirit in the prophet, and applied to Him by the apostles, were exactly verified: "I am found of them that sought Me not; but all the day long have I stretched out My hands to a disobedient, a rebellious people."

II. By way of brief improvement, observe,

1. The force of prophecy as an evidence of inspiration. The sign and test of prophecy is its fulfilment; according to the rule laid down by Moses, "if the word does not take place, the Lord has not spoken." Here a series of events, extending through a tract of ages, was required to prove the prediction inspired. Nothing could be more improbable beforehand than the accomplishment of such a prophecy; but the infinite mind of Deity penetrated futurity, and His power fulfilled His word.

2. The dignity of our Lord. He appears as the chief, the central object of prophecy; the light that illuminates its obscurity. The Spirit of Christ was the Spirit of prophecy; no events were touched by the prophets but such as had some relation to the kingdom of Christ, to the grand scheme of Christianity which rests on Him. Even in the early period of the patriarchs, He was the principal object of desiring expectation to holy men.

3. The consolation which believers may derive from the character which our Saviour sustains. He is represented as the great Pacifier; the Prince of Peace to His faithful subjects. Was He, then, such? and am I at peace with God, being justified by faith in Him? Has His precious blood been shed in vain for me? The dim and distant prospect of "Shiloh" could make the dying patriarch suspend his prophecy, and afterward interpose that expression of his feeling, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." All the ancient saints were waiting for Him, down to Simeon, who could depart in peace, because his eyes had seen the Saviour. And shall this great salvation come so nigh to ourselves, knock at our hearts, and yet be neglected by us? How shall we escape, if we neglect Him who has warned us: "Except ye believe, ye shall all perish?"

4. Our assembling on this and similar occasions proves the truth of the prediction; it is a comment on the words, "To Him shall the gathering of the people be." Why are we not Gentile idolaters? it is because "Shiloh" has appeared among us. Every one that comes to Christ; every one that prays, "Lord, remember me among those who shall be gathered unto Thyself," is a living evidence of this prophecy. And where is there any true centre of union but in Jesus Christ? What other name is full of music to the dying? He is the object of all reasonable expectation: all that are awake to the desire

of salvation are running into His arms, seeking shelter under His cross! He must reign; and all must either "kiss the Son," or perish!

5. Observe, as the last thing, the vanity of Jewish hope. The people to whom He came are still "looking for another;" contradicting all prophecy, all history! But, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, when the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled, the children of Judah shall yet be visited with the Spirit of grace and of supplications; "they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him as one that mourneth for His first-born." Let us pray for their national conversion.

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IX.

THE DIVINE FOUNDATION.*

ISAIAH, XXVIII., 16: *Therefore thus saith the* LORD GOD, *Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, July 16, 1815.]

THE person and salvation of Jesus Christ are frequently in the Scriptures spoken of under the image here presented, the most obvious and expressive image of security, that of a foundation. In one of the Psalms we read, in words which in the gospel narrative our Saviour expressly appropriates to Himself, that "the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." In a passage of the Prophet Zechariah, Jehovah declares, "Behold, I bring forth My Servant the Branch;" a distinguished prophetic title of the Messiah; "for, behold the stone that I have laid; upon one stone shall be seven eyes;" an expression denoting the perfection of Divine knowledge and wisdom that would be possessed by Christ; just, as in the Apocalypse, He is represented as "a lamb having seven eyes, which," it is added, "are the seven spirits of God:" the sacred number, "seven," being used to mark the perfection of spiritual gifts that reside in Christ for the benefit of those who believe.

The same architectural idea is continued in the New Testament. Thus, when Peter expressed his conviction that Jesus was the promised Christ, the Son of God, our Lord answered him by the assurance, "upon this rock," upon the foundation of this faith and confession, "will I build my church." St. Paul similarly reminds his brethren, that they are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." And, to close these few selected

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

illustrations, the text, with some variation, is thus introduced by St. Peter in his former Epistle: "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious; unto whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house: wherefore it is contained in the Scripture; behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth in Him shall not be confounded."

The laying of a foundation, on which the hope of a repenting sinner may rest with regard to God and eternity, is represented through the whole tenour of the Scriptures as the grand object which God has proposed to Himself in all his dispensations to man. This must be evident to those who have examined the Bible with sufficient attention. We trace this destined foundation, on the day of man's first disobedience and fatal fall, in that primal promise of an incarnate Redeemer: "the woman's seed shall bruise the serpent's head." We trace it in the mysterious rite of sacrifice, divinely appointed, from the beginning, to prefigure the atoning Lamb of God: "by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." We trace it in the promised seed of Abraham, in which all nations should be blessed. We trace it in the whole system of the law as given by Moses, both the moral and the ceremonial; a schoolmaster, in both its parts, to Jesus Christ: the moral law coming in "that the offence might abound," that the charge of guilt might be fixed on all, and every mouth be stopped; while the ceremonial institutions pointed to the Divine remedy provided in the righteousness and blood of the Son of God. We trace the same foundation for human hope, more and more distinctly announced in the Psalms and the prophecies: every where we discern the promise of a Divine Redeemer, and recognise the truth of His own declaration: "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of Me." That which is the great object of God's works in reference to man was naturally the great subject of God's word; as being at once most excellent in itself, and most important to be known by us. The foundation proclaimed by Jehovah in the text is the chief end of all that He has done and revealed to mankind; it is the central point in which all the lines of His providence and of His word meet and terminate. Nature supplies the scene, providence the scaffolding, revelation the plan, of that mighty spiritual edifice, of which this is the foundation!

It cannot be necessary to take up time in proving that such a foundation was needed; that sin had laid the world in a state of moral ruin; that the human soul was deeply fallen, and required to be raised and sustained. None will be found so infatuated or so obdurate as to deny or dispute this point. So sensible, indeed, are men that they need a foundation for hope towards God, that every one is disposed to lay his own. The fool flatters himself with the shadow of a house which he has built on the sand: even

the greatest sinner will cherish a hope of salvation, founded on some imaginary basis of his deceitful heart. For every one feels that some foundation is necessary; that, without some restitution made to a holy God, sin cannot be pardoned, nor the sinner saved. The mercy of God, taken by itself alone, is no proper foundation; it must be supported on an adequate restitution to the offended holiness of God. The question is, How shall a proper foundation be laid? where shall an adequate restitution be found? the most important question in the universe to be answered, and, at the same time, the most difficult!

We value a benefit the more highly, when we understand not only its greatness, but also the difficulties which were overcome in attaining it. Let us try to deepen and enlarge our value of this Divine foundation, by considering how difficult it was to be laid. And as familiarity with any subject impairs its impression (witness the wonderful, but familiar, appearances of nature!), and as we are so familiar with the mention of God's method of salvation, that we too often hear it mentioned with a languid attention, let us hope that, by bending our thoughts to a more fixed examination of its amazing difficulty, we may attain a more lively impression of its greatness and importance. The real difficulty of this work, of laying a firm foundation for a ruined soul, for a whole world of ruined souls, it is not possible fully to comprehend: the magnitude of such an undertaking is great, beyond all finite conceptions. "If one man sin against another, the judge may judge him; but if a man sin against Jehovah, who shall entreat for him?"

None will pretend that created beings of any other order could interpose between an offended God and guilty man: angels, who veil their faces before the throne, could do nothing here: they, like man, could fulfil only their own obedience; and we read in Job that they are charged with imperfection. The foundation must be laid either by man or by God, by the offender or the judge; difficulties, apparently insurmountable, attend the laying of it by either party. And first, on the part of man, there are three kinds of restitution made by offenders to an offended party; penitence, good works, or voluntary sufferings. These three are the only imaginable kinds of restitution; but none of these, nor all put together, can be deemed satisfactory in the case before us. Penitence is no foundation for the soul before God: the most sorrowful remembrance of sin cannot repair it; the bitterest tears cannot wash it away. Present penitence no more compensates for past transgression, than past penitence compensates for present transgression. The case of penitence is entirely different, and deserving of a different treatment, from the case of innocence: the penitent and the sinner being necessarily the same person; whereas the innocent is essentially distinct from both. This applies to penitence of the most perfect kind; much more such as ours, most defective at the best, and utterly inadequate

to the guilt incurred, and to the Judge concerned. The truth is, penitence is valuable merely as it implies and impresses on the penitent a hatred and a dread of sin: it is no restitution; it is no foundation. Neither, secondly, are good works, to which the same insufficiency attaches: present obedience cannot atone for past disobedience: good works are just as much required as they would have been if we had never done evil; they are always required, and therefore can never possess a superfluity or redundancy of merit. And this applies to the best works; but what are ours in the sight of God?

The third and the only remaining kind of restitution is by voluntary sufferings; this, by its very definition, is absurd and vain: for if any sufferings are required, they become part of our duty; but to invent penances of our own, is to introduce what, being not required, can be no part of our duty; it is to superadd what must be rather contradictory than satisfactory to the Divine law. Besides which, we may well demand, how can any finite, momentary sufferings, whether voluntary or even required, expiate the guilt of rebellion against the majesty of infinite, eternal holiness? Penitence, good works, voluntary sufferings—these methods of restitution may satisfy the judgment of the papal church; but, depend upon it, they will not satisfy the judgment of that God with whom we must have to do! These methods may procure for us the priestly absolution of a poor sinful man like ourselves, but they will not secure to us the Divine acceptance. These methods may save us from an imaginary purgatory, but they will not exempt us from the Divine condemnation! But these are the only assignable foundations which could be laid on our part for our pardon and acceptance with God. Nor could the highest angel have proposed another: in a question like this, which immediately belongs to God, the highest angel is on a level with the meanest of intelligent creatures. There must be silence not only on earth, but in heaven also; a silence in heaven, not like that of which St. John speaks in the Apocalypse, "for half an hour," but for eternity itself! Here it is that Jehovah interposes; and, breaking the silence of universal despair, exposing to contempt the visionary confidences of men, proclaims with an authority all His own, "Behold, *I* lay in Zion for a foundation a stone!" Similarly, in another passage, He declares, "I looked, and there was none to save; therefore mine own arm hath brought salvation." To the same purpose the Psalmist, having predicted the head-stone of the corner, adds, "This is Jehovah's work, and it is marvellous in our eyes;" or if it be not, it is because our eyes are blinded! for, as the apostle affirms with emphasis, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ!"

Observe, it is in the midst of the false foundations, the "baseless fabrics" of sinners, that God, in the connexion of the text, introduces His own, the only true and solid foundation. All who

build their hope on any other than this, than the salvation which is by faith in Jesus Christ, shall be compelled at last to say, in the expressive language of the prophet, "We have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hid ourselves:" for, as it is here added, "the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it;" the bed and the covering of our own imaginary righteousness. In the closing words of the text, it is evidently implied that "he who believeth not, shall make haste;" he shall find and feel that none but a Divine righteousness can bear the light of a Divine countenance; that when the awful warning which immediately follows the text shall be fulfilled, "Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place;" "in that day shall Jehovah be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty to His people;" "in Him alone shall they have righteousness and strength."

But some, perhaps, may think, however vast and insurmountable the difficulty of which we speak to men or to angels, there could be none to God: before Omnipotence difficulty must disappear. He who had created all, had all at His absolute disposal. It lay within the compass of His infinite authority to pardon and restore a world of sinners by a peremptory grant, without the intervention of means, without the demand of a compensation for offence, without the laying of such an elaborate and costly foundation. It needed but His will and word, and all was done; while none could say, "What doest Thou?" to Him who "giveth no account of His matters:" just as, in the natural creation, it needed but His call, "Let there be light!" and light sprang forth from the darkness of chaos! It was free to God to have accepted, as some even now imagine that He has accepted, such inadequate modes of restitution as those which have been mentioned, the penitence, reformation, or voluntary penance of the offenders. But God, it must be remembered, is a moral agent, as well as an Almighty Being; and in a difficulty of a moral kind, like that in question, Omnipotence itself is of no avail. Power has no more to do in a case of pure reason, than reason in a case of mere power. He who could speak and it was done; He who could say, "Let there be light, and there was light," could not, with the same simplicity and ease, proclaim, "Let heaven be opened to returning sinners!" Omnipotence might certainly pardon and restore; but to pardon and restore reasonably, morally, righteously, in such a way as to maintain and display the glorious character of the Almighty Sovereign—a character composed of various attributes, of which none may be exalted upon the ruin of another, but each must preserve its own perfection, and be exercised in perfect concord with the rest: to pardon and restore conformably with such a character, so as to produce the harmonizing of His holiness, and this in operation as His justice, with

His mercy, and His grace; so as to display at once the just God and the justifying Saviour; so as to make "mercy and truth meet, righteousness and peace embrace;" so as to reconcile the angelic song in both its parts, "Glory to God in the highest heavens, with good-will to man, and peace on earth;" to provide a salvation, not less, but far more gloriously expressive of the Divine character than the destruction of sinners, for which it is the remedy; this is some idea of the difficulty which existed, as it should appear, before God Himself.

It is the perfection of human government not to exercise power apart from principle and law. Human government is, in this respect, an imperfect imitation of the Divine. God, in His vast administration, is pleased to bind Himself by a self-prescribed system of rules and obligations, arising out of His eternal nature, His essential perfection. As it is a first principle of human government to maintain the authority and honour of the sovereign, to visit with signal severity acts of offence against the throne, so the Divine law may be expected to point its terrors against what implies a rebellious contempt of the Divine Majesty, an impious challenge of the Divine justice; and such is all presumptuous sin—an affront and assault upon the throne of heaven. Hence the primal law, "The day thou sinnest, thou shalt die:" hence that law, republished by Moses, "Cursed is every one who continues not in all things written in this book of the Divine law."

How to surmount such a difficulty in laying a Divine foundation for human recovery, who could have preconceived? . . . . The injury committed, the guilt contracted, is immense; as it must be estimated in relation to infinite majesty and holiness. Nothing can be forgiven without an apparent violation of the Divine veracity as well as justice. No created being can interfere as mediator, far less make satisfaction, where the Creator is concerned; and the very greatness of God is, to say it with reverence, an increase of the difficulty on His part: He could not effect this because He could effect all things beside. His "judgments," we know, "are a great deep;" but that deep is circumscribed as by a moral shore, and, like the natural ocean, obeys the law, "Hitherto and no farther!" For while Deity alone could save, how could Deity suffer? how could the most stupendous of prodigies be realized? Could the Lord of life and immortality expire? Could eternal glory be eclipsed in darkness and shame? Could anguish pierce the bosom of eternal beatitude? Could the charge of guilt be fixed upon infinite perfection? Behold the great mystery of godliness, the pillar and the ground of gospel truth, God manifested in the flesh! Behold the satisfaction which, though the only one assignable in the universe, neither man nor angel (could either have conceived it) could have presumed to name: the salvation which is entirely and exclusively of God; which He required, which He provided, which He accepted, and which He revealed: the foundation which He an-

nounces as all His own in the words, "Behold, *I* lay in Sion!" of which He speaks thus by another prophet, Zechariah, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he (a type of Christ) shall bring forth the head-stone of my temple with shoutings of grace, grace; for not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah." He who laid the foundations of the heavens and the earth, alone could lay this foundation-stone in Sion!

You know the wonderful way in which this stone was laid; how a Person of the Godhead assumed our human nature: He who was in the form of God took the form of a servant: He became "Jehovah, our righteousness," Emmanuel, or God with us; "God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to men their trespasses." The Word, which in the beginning was God, enshrined His glory among us in a tabernacle of flesh; became at once (according to the double meaning of the Hebrew name Goel) our Redeemer and our Kinsman; the "Wonderful" in His person, the "Counsellor" in His office; "the Mighty God and the Prince of peace!" All this was accomplished by His mysterious incarnation, that perfect expedient of infinite wisdom. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman," as to His person, "made under the law," as to His office, and, as to the gracious and glorious end proposed, "to redeem us from the curse of the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and partake the spirit of His Son in our hearts." His immaculate purity being secured by His supernatural conception; as man, He suffered in our guilty nature, and became a sin-offering and a curse in behalf of accursed sinners: as God, He stamped an importance on His sufferings, worthy of the nature offended, and compensated the duration of the punishment by the dignity of the sacrifice. This is "Christ, the wisdom and the power of God;" this is He in reference to whom Jehovah might well predict, "Behold, I lay in Sion for a foundation a stone!" All the vast, the appalling difficulty which infinite wisdom perceived, infinite love decided to overcome. God the Father would lay this foundation, although it must be laid in the blood of His own Son! It was laid in Sion, the scene of our Saviour's nativity, and of His death; the site of the Jewish temple, and the type of the Christian Church. In coming to Mount Sion, we come, according to the Scripture idea, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and especially to Jesus the Mediator, and the blood of sprinkling.

To the general announcement of this foundation, as one laid by Jehovah in Sion, is added, in the text, a brief mention of its excellent qualities. It is represented as "a tried stone," a foundation that has resisted the strongest attempts to shake it—that has stood the trial of unnumbered enemies and friends. It has been proved in the fiery trial of the Divine justice: the sins of the whole world have tried its strength to sustain an overwhelm-

ing weight; the scoffs and sophistries of infidelity have been in vain employed to undermine it; the storms of persecution have raged against it in vain; all the fiery darts of the grand adversary have been hurled with all his art and force against this "rock of offence" to him and his—and still it stands uninjured! "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever;" and His Church is built upon Himself, as that Rock against which not the gates of hell shall prevail. "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." In every respect, "a tried stone;" tried by God, by Satan, by man; tried in life, in death, in eternity; tried by all the saints in all their trials; and never tried in vain! Well, indeed, may we, whose office it is to preach the everlasting gospel, proclaim this to be "a tried stone;" for this is the doctrine which is found to succeed, where every other has failed. Yes, my brethren, the righteousness and blood, the love and grace of the Saviour, come home to the sinner's heart, where no force of arguments, no statement of evidences, no deduction of religious truths from natural sentiments, could produce any deep impression. The still small voice of the Lamb of God is mightier in operation than even the thunders of Mount Sinai! Appeals to the understanding must be lost upon many, and, even where best appreciated, exert but a feeble influence on the heart: but this—that "God so loved the world that He gave His Son"—this, that "Christ so loved His Church that He gave Himself for it," is a doctrine, or, rather, a fact, that finds its way to every understanding, while it strikes upon every cord of the heart. Here is a doctrinal fact, that forms the grand distinction of revealed religion; in comparison with which nothing besides, which even the Bible contains, appears, in the view of a dying sinner, of magnitude or energy, as a resting-place for the soul! All besides vanishes into comparative insignificance; and, amid the ruins of dissolving nature, Jesus Christ remains alone!

Fitly, therefore, so well tried, is He next described as a "precious corner-stone." The corner-stone denotes the most important part of the building; and such, in the spiritual edifice, is Christ; such, in the gospel system, the doctrine of the cross. Take the testimony of St. Paul: "I am determined to know nothing among you, save Christ crucified;" "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jew a stumbling-block, to the Greek foolishness; but to those who are called, the power and wisdom of God;" "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ!" The corner-stone unites both sides of an edifice; and St. Paul represents Christ as Him in whom the whole building, fitly compacted, rises as a spiritual habitation of God; Him in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek, wise nor unwise; but all the children of God that were scattered abroad are gathered into one family, and things on earth are harmonized with things in heaven. Well may this "corner-stone" be signalized as "precious;" precious

in respect to the wondrous constitution of the Saviour's person; His nature as the only-begotten Son of God! precious in respect to His sacrifice; a foundation, composed, not of corruptible things, as silver and gold, but of the precious blood of God's unblemished Lamb! precious in His salvation, that of an immortal soul; for which what shall man give in exchange; for the loss of which what compensation could the whole world make? precious as an inheritance undefiled, and that fadeth not away; an exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Well may St. Peter remind his brethren and ourselves, "Unto you, therefore, that believe, He is precious." Well may St. Paul, as an example for our imitation, affirm, "I count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ my Lord, that I may win Him, be found in Him, and being made conformable to His death, may know the power of His resurrection."

"A sure foundation;" not an imaginary one, like every other, but one real and substantial! In the Hebrew the word is reduplicated, for the greater emphasis, "a foundation, a foundation!" not a transitory one, but an eternal! not one variable with circumstances or feelings, but unchangeable as "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness!" We are dying men; we sojourn in a world of vanity and death; what we want is "a sure foundation." Behold in Christ this grand desideratum! "Lift up your eyes, saith Jehovah, to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath! the heavens shall vanish like smoke, the earth shall wax old like a garment, and all that dwell therein shall die; but My salvation shall be forever, My righteousness shall not be abolished;" even that righteousness, and that salvation, which is provided in Christ, and proclaimed in the gospel! The foundations of the heavens and the earth may be removed, but this sure foundation shall stand forever!

The excellence of the foundation having been thus declared, the happiness of him who rests upon it is affirmed in the closing words, "he that believeth shall not make haste;" he shall not be thrown into disquietude and agitation of spirit. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep his heart and mind in Christ Jesus." The sincere and steadfast believer in Jesus Christ, knowing whom he has believed, shall not be ashamed of his hope, nor afraid of evil; but shall possess an ineffable composure, an imperturbable confidence: for "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, O Lord, because he trusts in Thee." Thousands, in every age of gospel faith, have attested the veracity of the promise, "he that believeth shall not make haste." Nothing is better ascertained, nothing more familiar to many, than the believing peace and joy, the abounding hope, with which, amid the lingering languor of disease, Christians have been filled to the last hour of nature's trial! With the prophetic eye of faith, and the fearless heart of love, they have pierced the veil of eternity; looked into the invisible

world; rejoiced in an unseen Saviour as present at their side; anticipated heaven on earth; and never known such serenity, such happiness, as in the immediate presence of death, of what nature justly deems the king of terrors! Never has the strength of this foundation been so well appreciated as when it was most tried, most needed: never have they so truly felt its support as when every other prop disappeared: the more they leaned on this, the more their whole soul rested its whole weight on this; the more they experienced a strength perfect in weakness; a security illustrated by danger; a personal tranquillity amid circumstantial distress. When our flesh and our heart faileth, then is the time to find in God the rock of our heart, in Christ, the foundation of our soul! But then we must possess the character defined in the text: "he that believeth" is he that, amid the wreck of nature, shall be saved on this foundation. We must see to it that we are true believers; that ours is not a dead, not a merely nominal, but a real and a living faith; a precious faith, as Peter marks it from that which is worthless, in the precious corner-stone; a faith which is known by its fruits, which keeps the commandments, purifies the heart, works by love, overcomes the world, resists the devil, rejoices in the Saviour!

By this true faith, dear brethren, lay hold, now in the accepted time, on this Divine foundation! with the earnestness of ship-wrecked mariners, utter that cry of the heart which, so uttered, will never be unheard, "Lord, save us, or we perish!" Cast yourselves on Christ, as your Rock, the ground of your hope; and show your gratitude, your love to Him, by imitation of His example, in deep dependance on His Spirit. So shall you be saved on the Foundation laid in Sion; and to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, you shall ascribe everlasting praise.

X.

THE ABILITY OF JESUS CHRIST TO SAVE TO THE UTTERMOST.*

HEBREWS, vii., 25: *He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, October 22, 1826.]

IT was the design of St. Paul, in this epistle, to confirm the Jewish Christians, persecuted as apostates by their Jewish brethren, in the faith of Christianity. To this purpose the apostle shows the superiority of the gospel to the law, and makes it clear

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

how the gospel substantiates what was before a shadow, and completes and finishes the picture of which the law had merely given the rudiments. As sacrifice and priesthood were two great features of the ceremonial law, he applies these at large, in the chapter before us, to Jesus Christ, as their true object and substance.

In the text two things engage us: first, the character of the persons to whom it relates, "Those that come to God by Jesus Christ;" and, secondly, the ability of Jesus Christ to save such, and the extent of that ability: "He is able to save such to the uttermost."

I. The character is that of those who come to God by Jesus Christ. Whenever a mediator or intercessor is mentioned, it is supposed that there exists a previous relation between us and God. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and man." This natural relation to God must be first remembered, as the reason why a mediator is required. The grand assumption of Christianity consists of two parts: first, that we stand in a natural relation to God; and, secondly, that we have violated this relation. The idea of coming to God seems to be taken from the practice of the Israelites as coming to the temple in their local worship. It is no longer now a local approach; it is a mental approach, a movement of the mind, a turning of the heart to God.

This coming may be regarded under two aspects: we must come as subjects to obey God, and come as suppliants to enjoy God. Those who come, come not only to promote the interests of His glory by their obedience, but their own happiness also, by taking God for their portion; they come with a heart which the world cannot fill, to have it filled by God. Whoever so comes is the character that has the comfort of the text, has a share in the redemption of Jesus Christ. But all that come to God must come by Jesus Christ. The mercy of God flows through no other channel than the righteousness and worthiness of Jesus Christ. He is the only way to God: "No man comes to the Father but by Me." Having, therefore, such a High Priest, such a new and living way to the Father, let us draw near.

II. The ability of Jesus Christ to save such, and its extent, "to the uttermost."

1. His ability: this is clear from various views.

(1.) He alone is appointed by God: "Him hath God the Father sealed" to dispense the bread of life to dying sinners. He was declared—that is, defined, ascertained, determined—to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead, as the crown of all his other miraculous attestations; declared to be the only Saviour, the only refuge from the offended justice of God.

(2.) He actually shed his blood as an atonement for sin. Though sin is infinite, and the justice of God infinite also, there

was a sufficiency in the blood of Christ, as He was at once a divine and human person, God and man in one. The reasons, arising from the moral character of God, why sin should be punished, have now ceased in behalf of believers in Jesus: God is at once just, and the justifier of such; for God made Him sin for us, or a substitute for our sin: the chastisement which obtained our peace was laid on Him, and all our iniquities made to meet on Him. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son," because His Son, "cleanseth from all sin." The sacrifice of Christ was as pleasing to God as sin had been displeasing; it was as perfect a satisfaction to His justice as sin had been an offence. It was represented, therefore, long before it was offered, in the typical sacrifices of the law. "But if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God!" It is called emphatically His own blood: "not with the blood of bulls, but with his own, hath He entered in."

(3.) It is a clear evidence of His ability to save, that God has raised Him up to sit at His own right hand. He who was "delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification;" His own justification in our behalf. Had He not risen, the inference would have been that His death had failed; but now God has proclaimed to all worlds that Christ has vanquished death, and made the last enemy the instrument and agent of benefit to those who believe.

(4.) Since "He ever liveth in heaven to make intercession for them," therefore He must be able to save believers. Whether His intercession is actual or merely virtual, literal or merely figurative, we may not be able to determine: probably it is the former; probably, as He interceded on earth for His followers, so He does in heaven; He continues the priesthood which commenced from His sacrifice and ascension: this seems implied in His words, "I will pray the Father:" He stands as a High Priest before the throne of God; presents the sacrifice of the "Lamb as newly slain" in the midst of the throne; reminds His Father of all His dolorous sufferings, of the wormwood and the gall!

2. His ability to save extends "to the uttermost." The term is used in a very general and indeterminate sense; in every possible case and period. There are, then, two great views of its import: He can save, first, from every kind and degree of guilt; secondly, to the whole extent of duration.

(1.) Every kind and degree of guilt is here included. The sins of men are very various; every man's conscience reads a different history to him, peculiar to himself; every one that knows the plague of his heart, is apt to suppose that he must be a greater sinner than all beside; must be, as the apostle considered himself, "the chief of sinners," though this can be strictly

true of only one: so many aggravations of sin present themselves to his view, so many checks and resolutions broken, so much light and grace resisted, so many mercies despised; surely no other offender ever equalled himself! But let these aggravations be what they may, the blood of Jesus Christ is adequate; you cannot have committed a sin which that blood cannot efface, unless you could suppose it to be the sin against the Holy Ghost, which you cannot have committed, if you have the least disposition to repent. The blood of Jesus Christ is a deluge that drowns all the mountains of transgression; that pure ocean washes away all stains of guilt. It is a sacrifice whose odour fills all worlds! a satisfaction that extends to all the principles of the divine government. The apostle seems almost to single out himself as a selected and designed monument of the unlimited extent of Christ's atonement. "This is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern* to them that should hereafter believe unto life everlasting." Some may think they have wandered too long in ways of sin, stifled too many successive convictions, and sinned away the virtue of Christ's blood. However long you may have sinned, yet if you will now repent, though at the eleventh hour, you shall be saved. Among the redeemed multitude, there will be found sinners of every extent and condition: some that early sought the Lord, and walked long with Him in grace; but others, also, called in their hoary hairs, after many years of rebellion. And Jesus Christ saves "to the uttermost," not only in regard to the first conversion of the sinner; there remains much yet to be effected after his conversion, and Jesus Christ effects it. Though the sinner is placed in a state of salvation from the moment of his receiving that faith which justifies with God, much yet remains to be purified, corrected, and wrought on the soul; and Jesus Christ is ever saving His people, going on to remove one hinderance after another, adding more grace, and supplying what is required. Moses never passed Jordan, as Joshua did, in triumphant possession of Canaan; and if Moses represented the law which he administered, Joshua, in this, is the type of Jesus, who has entered into heaven, with full power over all His enemies, the Captain of His conquering people. He has a right to bring in many sons to glory: "I will," says He, "that they whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am."

(2.) As to the other view mentioned, the extent of His ability through all duration, it is everywhere asserted. His blood, so to speak, is just as warm and fresh as when it was first shed: it

* There is a beautiful remark on this expression in a sermon, the only one which I heard delivered, by the Rev. S. Summers, Mr. Hall's esteemed successor as the pastor of Broadmead: "Paul had abundant evidence that his experience was a pattern; and, since his time, millions of copies have been taken. The plate is not yet destroyed, not even worn. They are still proof impressions, exhibiting every lineament of the same long-suffering kindness."—*Sermon VIII. on Jesus Christ the Fountain of Grace, in the selection published after his death*, 1836.—GRINFIELD

has an undecaying virtue. The Lamb forever appears as newly slain, though millions have been already saved, and millions more remain to be saved. He was offered once for all; He is an eternal, unchangeable High Priest; for God's law has been once for all fully satisfied by Him. No generation can arise that will not equally want this Saviour, and none that will not equally find Him sufficient; for all the fulness of God dwells in Him, and He ever lives to make intercession for us!

Thus far to the consolation of believers. But there are others that rather need to be awakened. Some are not in a state to receive the gospel consolations; persons that neglect God, and never repented. Let such now return; now he courts your friendship; He seeks, as it were, your reconciliation, and says by His servants, "Be ye reconciled to God!" All things are ready; a willing mind is the only thing you want. Let us all, then, give ourselves up from this time to the adorable Redeemer, and we shall find, by happy experience, that He is all we can desire; that "He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" that, in a word, "we are complete in Him."

XI.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST KNOWN BY CHRISTIANS.*

EPHESIANS, iii., 17, 18, 19: *That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, May 7, 1829, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

THESE words are part of the apostle's prayer for the Ephesian saints. The blessings which he asks are of such a nature that he despaired of their being bestowed by any power less than the mighty power of God. He invokes the Divine aid in the highest form of its manifestation. "For this cause," he says, "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." It is a prayer of faith, founded on the revealed intentions of God; on the apostle's

* From the Notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

own experience of spiritual blessings, and on what he knew of the covenant of redemption. And it behooves us, my brethren, who profess the same faith, the same Lord, to aspire to a participation in the fulfilment of this exalted and comprehensive prayer: otherwise our religion must be supposed essentially different from the religion of these early believers, and, consequently, it must be productive of different effects in another world. It by no means follows that, because we live in a different age of the Church, we are to differ in our Christian experience from the first disciples. The religion of Christ is essentially the same in all ages of His Church.

The apostle expects his prayer to be fulfilled by the bestowment of an experimental knowledge of "the love of Christ;" and he represents its qualities as such that it can be understood only by the operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul. Nothing can give us a higher idea of its greatness and sublimity than this. The language which he uses in describing this love is figurative; and, though it is not necessary that we should nicely distinguish the meaning of every part of the metaphor, yet perhaps we may understand the term "breadth" to express the extent of the benefit procured by this love; its "length" may denote its duration, from eternity to eternity; while "depth and height," which express the same dimensions viewed from opposite points, may represent its intensity. We estimate the degree of benevolence in any being by its effects; by what it has produced: and we must apply the same test here.

First, we may offer a few considerations tending to illustrate "the love of Christ;" and, in the second place, we may consider what is the nature of that experimental knowledge of this love for which the apostle prays.

I. With respect to "the love of Christ," it is exhibited in actions, in what Christ has done for those who are the objects of His love; for those who believe in His name. It may be seen,

1. In the impediments which it overcame: it was a love victorious over all that opposed it. The grand impediment was the state to which man was reduced by sin; he was hateful to God as a sinner! carnal, an enemy by evil works. It was for a race dead in sin that Christ gave Himself; a race repugnant to the eyes of His holiness. In this "God commends His love to us, that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Instead of any thing to attract His favourable regard, there was every thing to repel it. Yet he formed a scheme to recover us from our pollution, and restore us to God.

2. Besides the impediments to be overcome, there were sacrifices to be made. It was a work that could not be done by the mere power of God: God's law and righteous government were concerned: whether it was fit that sin should be pardoned, was a question of Divine wisdom. Christ was not master of His purpose but by suffering what was required. "It became Him, of whom and by whom are all things, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings." There was a necessity for such a vindication of His justice, and such a display of His law: satisfaction must be made to the rights of Deity.

And how was this to be done? Infinite wisdom, which was the only judge, chose that which (we may presume) was the only way; since, had any other existed, we must suppose that it would have been adopted instead of that which cost the Father so great a sacrifice as the death of the only-begotten Son. It was by His partaking of our sinful flesh, without our sin, that He effected the purpose of His love, the pardon of our sin. He bowed His greatness from the highest heavens, and pitched His tabernacle here. The Lord of life became a mortal; after having stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, He refused not the agonies of the cross! He loved us even to death: and this He did that God might be just, and yet justify us. This is a love whose magnitude must forever confound all estimate of finite minds. No other being could ever have offered up such a sacrifice. His Deity stamps upon His sufferings an infinite dignity. The greatness of God's love appears most of all in this, that He gave His Son to die for sinners!

3. The greatness of "the love of Christ" appears also in the benefits which He bestows. These are such as would never have entered into the conception of created minds. To have sin pardoned, to be set free from eternal death, this is an unspeakable deliverance; but the benefits are not only negative; they are positive in the highest degree. He accepts us, adopts us into His family; He gives His children portions of His own Spirit in their hearts; He makes them members of His body, fits them to dwell with Himself in a vast eternity, gives them to rejoice in the hope of the glory to be revealed, purifies them from their defilements, instructs them in heavenly truth, in death sustains their spirits, and after death preserves them in His holy presence for the great day when all shall be united in heaven!

4. This love, in its duration, extends from eternity to eternity. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Before the mountains were brought forth, before the earth and the world were created—then His delights were among the sons of men. This earth exists chiefly as the theatre of this love. Nothing short of having His people to dwell with Himself forever can satisfy His generous and immense benevolence. He cannot be content unless they are where He is. "Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given to Me, may be with Me where I am." They partake with Him of His glory, and He says to each at the hour of death, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

5. This love, farther, exists in spite of many things, on our part, calculated to alienate it from us. Who among us can think of the returns which he has made, the ingratitude, inconstancy, rebellion, which he has shown, without being confounded? yet, amid all, the Saviour's love is not extinguished; "many waters cannot quench its flame." Were it not that, from time to time, He revives our declining spirits, retouches His work of grace, and abides in our hearts to the end, we should fall and perish.

II. What is it so to know the love of God in Christ as the saints know it? Were it to be known merely as a theory, merely as a doc-

trine of revelation, it might soon be apprehended; and this, it is to be feared, is the only way in which many are content to know it. But it is an experimental knowledge of this love as it concerns ourselves; it is to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion that we are interested in it; it is this which St. Paul desires for his brethren. How, then, shall we know it thus? who shall go up to heaven for us, to read our names in the book of life? There is no need: we have only to consult our own experience. All who are the objects of this love are led to repent, to believe in the Saviour, to cast away every refuge beside, to embrace Jesus Christ alone, to close with His terms and promises. And all who thus believe are entitled to the strong consolation which the Gospel presents: Jesus Christ Himself has entitled them to it; for He has said, "He that hath the Son hath life; he hath the Father also." Jesus Christ ever liveth to make intercession for such: all penitents of this description He is able and willing to save to the uttermost.

And they know that they believe in Him: perhaps they recollect the season when they committed themselves to Him by an everlasting covenant; but whether they recollect the season or not, they know their mind, that they have no hope but in Christ! And "the fruit of the Spirit is joy:" we cannot know His love without rejoicing in Him: it is impossible that any one should contemplate with indifference this Saviour as his own. If we so believe in Him, as His first disciples did, we shall rejoice with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory:" we cannot be sensible that we are entitled to such privileges without some portion of that joy in ourselves. And this love and joy will dethrone other objects of the heart. Many may be loved in their degrees, but none like Him. His love will constrain us, because we judge that He died for all, that they might live to Him. You cannot believe yourself an object of such love without feeling that "to you He is precious." His love will impel you to obedience: you will feel the force of His own appeal: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

The world will be overcome by this love: the cross of Christ will crucify the world to us and us to the world. All its glory will be darkened to our view, all its sweetness poisoned to our taste, by the contemplation of "the love of Christ." The life of faith will subdue the life of sense. "Who is he that overcometh, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

And hence, if we "know the love of Christ," we shall glorify Him in these two principal ways:

1. We shall obey Him; we shall bind His laws to our hearts; bind his reproach as a diadem on our heads: like His apostles, we shall count it an honour to suffer shame for His sake. The true test of love to Him is a life of obedience to His law, and submission to His will.

2. We shall show forth His praise; desire that His true servants may increase, that His kingdom may come, and His will be done in all the world. We shall never lose sight of the essential distinction

in character and destiny between those that are His and those that are not. The love of Christ is an absorbing, an elevating principle, that will never rest until it shall have transformed us into His image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.

XII.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.*

1 PETER, ii., 21: *Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.*

[Preached at Great Queen-street Chapel, London, June 20th, 1827, at the anniversary of the Baptist Missionary Society.]

THERE are two extremes against which it is equally our duty to guard in the consideration of such passages as this. The one is, that the appearance of Jesus Christ upon earth was chiefly designed to set us an example of moral virtue, and that he came merely to exemplify those precepts which from time to time had been given to men. You, my Christian friends, I am persuaded, have not so learned Christ; you well know that Christ had a higher end in view in his ministry in this world than merely to set a perfect example. Had this been all, instead of encouraging men in holy obedience, he would only have spread terror and dismay through our race, and forever cut off all hope of our obtaining salvation. And yet, on the other hand, we must not forget that *one* of the ends of Christ's coming was certainly to afford us a perfect standard of holiness, and to exemplify fully the nature of his own precepts. Every Christian will perceive this, and will, therefore, make his life the object of constant attention. It is evident that the apostle regarded it in this light; for in the context he says, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." It is true, indeed, that the *sufferings* of Jesus Christ were for a purpose which renders imitation on our part impossible; and yet we perceive that even this department of his character is not exempted, much more the actions of his life. There were frequent occasions on which Christ proposed himself to his disciples for their imitation: "Learn of me," said he, "for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

The principle of imitation is common to human nature. The very first attempts at instruction, on the part of parents, proceed on this principle; and on this the first elements of education entirely depend. The same principle remains with us all the days of our life; nor can we ever extricate ourselves completely from its influence. In all our intercourse with society, and in all the various actions we perform,

* Reported in the Pulpit, vol. viii.

we are more or less conscious of its power. Our regard to the various customs of mankind and the fashions of civilized life are founded on the exercise of this principle. The resemblance which one part of a family bears to another proceeds on our imitation of those tempers and dispositions which most forcibly attract our notice: we wish to accommodate ourselves, as far as possible, to the views and feelings of those who are almost continually near us, and hence we insensibly slide into a resemblance to them. On this same principle do Christians act; and never are Christians so truly holy as when they most nearly imitate the character of the Son of God, who is set before them as their great Pattern. It is my intention, on the present occasion,

First, *To point out some of the principal reasons by which this example of Christ comes recommended to our imitation.*

And I shall chiefly fix on those features which do not apply to any other character, or which are not to be found in any other character to an equal extent and with an equal force.

1. This imitation of Christ comes recommended to us *by its being the only perfect standard of moral virtue.* It has this advantage over every other example, however excellent, that it is excellence without the admixture of any contrary principle. His freedom from the taint of original sin was secured by his immaculate conception; and, with respect to all the actions of his life, we have the most abundant proof that "he did no sin," and that "no guile was found in his mouth." The standard of morals which he has exhibited is perfect: we need never fear that our imitation of him can be carried to excess. In proportion as we are found walking "in his steps," we are walking in the path of excellence, pursuing the principles of unerring rectitude, and aiming at perfection in holiness.

In order to obtain a just view of the excellence of Christ's character, it is necessary to make it our constant study. It is not by a cursory glance that objects of perfection impress our minds with an idea of their excellence: there is something generally pleasing in them — there is nothing that can possibly offend; and hence the impression made by the casual observation of them has no peculiar force. Indeed, it very frequently happens, that objects of the most perfect symmetry strike our minds less than those which are deformed. The *first* impression made on our minds by the contemplation of the Saviour's excellences is not always that of astonishment. It is that sort of moral excellence which requires to be diligently studied and patiently examined: it will never strike the eye of a careless and indifferent spectator. The imperfection of our judgments, the depravity of our natures, cannot be brought to this contemplation of purity and perfection: there must be a wish to behold, a disposition to admire, its beauty; and the very wish, the very attempt to understand it, will go far to purify our hearts.

We cannot be sufficiently thankful for such a standard of moral excellence. All human examples, however excellent, are perfect only in parts: they exhibit some striking excellences, but they exhibit

also defects. But when we contemplate the excellences of the Son of God, we see nothing defective; we can conceive of nothing which might be added. Let us but meditate on the character of Christ as we ought, and we shall not fail to make the most rapid progress in that holiness which is the peculiar characteristic of "the inheritance of the saints in light." In him there is the marvellous union of majesty and meekness, of greatness and condescension: his humility was always tempered by grandeur, and his grandeur was always softened by humility. Every part of his character was sustained in like manner: each virtue, each excellence, had its due proportion; and the whole exhibited a perfect standard of moral excellence, such as was never before exhibited to the world.

2. The example of Christ is recommended to us above that of all others, *by his pre-eminent dignity.* We know well the effect of dignity of station: hence arises the superior importance of virtue in high life. The history of our own nation may show us how powerfully the example of one profligate monarch may influence the conduct of a whole kingdom. On the other hand, when we behold virtue in men of high station, a sentiment of honour mingles with our admiration: the character is at once entitled to our deference and our esteem. How dignified, then, is the character of Christ! He seemed to be unknown, and the very world to which he came "knew him not;" nothing was seen in him by many, that he should be admired; but, at that very time, he was the only-begotten Son of God, beloved and honoured of his Father. To his disciples only he fully revealed himself, while he veiled himself from the multitude; and his disciples often beheld in him that glory which he had with the Father before all worlds. And this glory and greatness remains with him: it is his unalienable right; and when all human glory shall have died away, and become forgotten—yea, when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth and all the works therein shall be burned up," no glory shall then be seen or admired but that which he possesses, or that which springs from his own inexhaustible excellence. This gives him dignity indeed: his character is the highest of which we can possibly conceive; and his character is to impress a dignity and excellence on all his followers, and to give a character of beauty and perfection to innumerable spiritual and immortal beings forever. Let us, then, consider him; let us take off our thoughts from all that is good and great upon earth; let us rise above holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and elevate our thoughts higher and yet higher, to fix our contemplations on the Son of God.

3. The imitation of this example is enforced *by that love and attachment which Christians feel to* CHRIST, *and which, in their minds, is supreme.* Love to Christ is so distinguishing a principle in the minds of Christians, and so highly reasonable and proper, that an apostle says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." But I now address myself to such as love the Saviour's name; and are you not aware of the power of this principle to facilitate imitation? We always aim to imitate those whom we esteem: we con-

sider ourselves laid under a sort of obligation to do this; we must do violence to our natures if we do not aim to imitate the objects of our attachment. On this principle, we hear the Saviour saying to his disciples, "If ye *love me*, keep my commandments." He might with equal propriety have said, "If ye love me, *walk in my steps*—imitate my conduct." And if this principle be so influential in common life, how much more powerful is it in the mind of the Christian! The love which Christians feel to Christ is greatly superior to that which we feel for father or mother, for wife or children. While, therefore, Christians cannot but *admire* the character of Christ, as a model of moral excellence and perfection, they will be led also to *imitate* him who is the object of their highest attachment.

4. There is another powerful reason why we should imitate Christ: He *is the person to whom, as Christians, we stand the most nearly related.* Strange as it may seem, through the economy of redemption we are placed in a direct relation to Christ; a relation more intimate, more endearing, more interesting, more transforming, than any other of which we can possibly conceive. The numerous emblems of this which are employed in the word of God, however striking, all fall short of the reality. We are pointed to various unions which exist in nature: Christ himself has selected one of them, and has said to his disciples, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Jesus Christ is styled, in Scripture, and that not in the language of compliment, but of truth, *the life* and *the hope* of his people. It is said to Christians, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Faith is the principle by which the Christian is united to Christ; and this faith has Christ for its object. The faith that justifies is, in its essence, a believing in the Son of God. Every Christian is thus united to Christ, and can say, "The life that I now live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." We are disciples of Christ but as we bear the image of Christ, but as our faith is in him, but as we hope through him. If we have remission of sins, it is through his blood; if we have a title to an immortal inheritance, it is through his life; if we rejoice in hope of everlasting glory, it is because he has entered that glory for us. The presence, the favour of Christ, constitutes the daylight of the Christian, in which he walks and in which he works. "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Christ is said to *dwell in the heart* of the Christian by faith. He is the inmate of the Christian's soul; he is intimately and continually present with him; he has spiritual intercourse with him; through him alone he presents all his prayers, and offers all his praises; he is

the centre of his wishes and expectations; from him all his hopes and consolations spring: no other example, therefore, can be before him but this. Others have lived to the glory of God; they have displayed various excellences, and have left the *record* of their excellences behind them; but Christ *lives* in the Christian: His example is not in the record, not in the letter merely, but in reality; ever nigh the Christian, perpetually before him, constantly *in* him. Hence one of the primitive Christians called his religion the *wearing* Christ *about* with him continually; a description highly expressive of the life of faith in the Son of God. Now, can we be so conversant with him? can we be so united to him? can we surrender the best feelings of our hearts to him? is he our sacrifice, our only hope, our supreme desire? can we feel that we owe all to Christ; that we are nothing, that we have nothing but through Him; and yet not aim to *copy* him? Shall we not call our minds off from all other objects as far inferior, and seek to have them fixed on his excellence, and aim to be more and more conformed to his lovely and perfect image?

5. I would observe, farther, that *the circumstances in which we are placed are such as render it extremely easy to imitate him.* We are called upon, in Scripture, to be "imitators of God." And yet he who should attempt to do this *absolutely*, would find himself most strangely at a loss. The movements of an infinite mind are so far above us that we cannot comprehend them. The Divine actions are more calculated to inspire awe than to encourage imitation. The Most High dwells in light inaccessible; "no man hath seen, or can see," Him. We can scarcely form, from his character, any idea of how we ought to act, or what we are required to do; but, in the person of his Son Jesus Christ, God has so revealed himself, that, without at all lowering his dignity or lessening his glory, he may yet be steadily gazed upon. "We beheld his glory," said his disciples, "the glory as of the only-bogotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Who could have supposed that "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords," would ever have been seen by mortal eye? Who could ever have hoped that the source and centre of all excellence and perfection would ever stoop to exhibit himself to his creatures? But that which we could not have supposed, and which it would have been presumption to have desired, has actually taken place! "The Word *was* made flesh, and *did* dwell among men." And now his glory has been beheld, his perfections have been revealed to us; they have been rendered imitable, and have become binding as an example. Jesus Christ has placed himself before us in such circumstances that we might calmly behold his excellence, and diligently apply ourselves to an imitation of his perfections. We cannot be sufficiently thankful for this. Had the Son of God seated himself on a throne; had he surrounded himself with the various attributes of majesty, we might, indeed, have been constrained to admire him, but, at any rate, we should not have had such an example as would have encouraged us to aim at imitation—we certainly should not have had such a pattern of patience and condescension in suffer-

ing. But when he came down to earth on purpose to do us good, we find that he not only assumed flesh and blood, but that he assumed it under those circumstances which brought his character to the level of our comprehension, and placed his excellences within the reach of our imitation. He chose a private station, in opposition to the preconceived opinions and prejudices of the Jews: He chose a suffering station, in opposition to the natural desire of ease and pleasure: He chose a dying station, in opposition to the powerful love of life. He subjected himself to weakness, to fatigue, to infirmity, and want: He persevered in a course of labour, though he often spent his strength "for naught, and in vain:" He "stretched out his hands all day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people." Thus his example became practical, and imitation was rendered possible. Thus he taught his disciples to endure fatigue and sufferings. Thus he taught them to labour patiently on, though they should see no immediate proofs of success, and though they should encounter only cruelty and scorn from those to whom they laboured to do so much good. And we can scarcely find ourselves placed, as Christians, in any circumstance in which the Saviour was not also placed. Are we called to sustain conflicts with the powers of darkness? He sustained such conflicts; and, while we behold him repelling all the attacks of Satan, with "It is written—it is written," we learn how to arm ourselves with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Christians are called to suffer reproach, and scorn, and contempt; the world knows them not, and casts out their names as evil: but He also suffered this; and he said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." In short, in all the varying scenes of our mortal conflict—in public and in solitude, in affliction and in distress—we behold him going before us, and exemplifying all the moral excellences of his character. In every situation in which we can find ourselves placed, we behold him persevering in the path of duty; never resting, never turning aside, but "enduring the cross and despising the shame," "with no hope, with no joy set before him," but that of saving immortal souls from endless perdition, and bringing them to life and glory everlasting.

Could you, therefore, conceive of an example better suited to the imitation of the Christian than that of the Son of God? Is it not most evident that he has made his life a prototype for that of his people, and that he wishes their lives to form a counterpart of his own?

6. There is another very important consideration which should enforce upon us this imitation of the example of Christ; namely, that *the very "holiness without which no man shall see the* LORD," *consists in this very imitation of* CHRIST. The very holiness which we need to prepare us for an admission to heaven is an imitation of the Son of God; and we are only his in proportion as we imitate his example. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The "same mind must be in us which was also in Him." The same holy unction which rested upon Him must be upon all his saints; and to

all true Christians it may be said, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." As the oil which anointed the head of the high-priest ran down even to the skirts of his garments, and caused them all to partake of the delightful fragrance, so the oil with which Christ was anointed flows down to all his followers. All the excellences and perfections which were in Christ are to be seen in every one of his people. "Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace." Grace in the members answering to grace in the head, grace in the springs answering to grace in the fountain. All the excellence that is seen in the Christian consists in his conformity to Christ. This conformity to Christ was purposed by the Almighty; and this his purpose is strictly fulfilled. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the* IMAGE OF HIS SON, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." God formed his human nature under the idea of its becoming a temple in which he might dwell, by the power of the Holy Spirit; and for this reason, that he might transform it into the Divine image, that he might make it to imitate, to resemble himself, so that he might appear to be "the first-born among many brethren." And in this character he impresses himself on the minds of his innumerable saints, and makes them all to wear his image. He is seen in them under the various circumstances of life, and he will come at last to be "*admired in his saints*, and glorified in them that believe." If there is in you any of the excellence of holiness, it must be a transmission of *His* excellence who once dwelt upon earth. And without this image impressed upon you, you cannot be acceptable to God. If an angel could appear before Him destitute of his image, of his spirit, that angel would be reprobated and cast away. The image of Christ alone can avail: the image of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, must be in you, and dwell in you forever and ever.

7. *This imitation of Christ is what the world expects from us.* I am addressing those whose aim it is to "glorify God in their bodies, and in their spirits, which are his." And it becomes us to act on all occasions in the full spirit of this duty. It is certain that the expectation of the world is such that they will be seriously disappointed if they find in us no resemblance to the Son of God. Were it otherwise, the boast and triumph of irreligion would be complete. Nothing would encourage the sneers of infidels so much as to see that Christians do not aim to resemble Christ. Either they would suppose that we did not imagine the character of Christ to be so excellent as we represent, or that it was inefficient in its influence on our conduct. And would you, my friends, in consequence of not aiming to be what Christ was, thus open the mouths of the men of the world? Would you thus pull down that sacred fabric which you profess to be so zealous to build up? Would you thus throw new difficulties in the way of sinners, who are already ignorant and out of the way, and need to be guided by you in the path to heaven? Would you, while you call yourselves

the servants of Christ, be thus busily employed in doing the devil's work? Oh, my friends, would you thus wound Christ in the house of his friends? Would you act the part of the treacherous Judas, who hailed his Master with a kiss, and then betrayed him into the hands of the high-priests, his bitterest foes? Oh, surely you will do any thing rather than thus grieve the Holy Spirit of God, rather than thus deny Christ by your works, while with your tongues you profess allegiance to him? And remember that there is no alternative. You are either imitators of Christ, or you are not: you are either the slaves of Satan or the servants of Christ; there is no alternative. And the time is now come when the world know this; and if they find that you are unkind, uncharitable, envious, malicious, revengeful, worldly, ambitious, proud, they will feel fully justified in all the contempt and scorn with which they treat the religion of Christ. "Ye are my witnesses," said the Lord to his people of old; and it becomes his people to witness for him against a world lying in ungodliness. How was the apostle distressed when he found that, by the inconsistent conduct of the professors of Christianity, "the name of Christ was blasphemed among the Gentiles!" And will it be less disgraceful for us to act thus, to whom life and immortality are brought so much more clearly to view? Oh, be not deceived, brethren. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," ye can have no part in the kingdom of God.

8. To urge this imitation upon you, I would observe, farther, that *we have a fuller account of the actions of the* SAVIOUR *than of any other individual whatever.* More is recorded of his life than of any of the prophets and apostles, however eminent. The biography of the Scripture is but scanty; two or three individuals who were remarkable types of Christ appear somewhat more prominently than the rest; but the most enlarged account bears no proportion to that space which is set apart for the history of Christ. And what can be the design of this? Not merely to sustain the evidence of Christianity, but to facilitate our imitation of Christ. His history is placed before us in a great variety of parts; and if we will but make ourselves fully acquainted with this history, we shall soon learn what we ought to be, and how we ought to act. You see him condemned of men, and justified of God; doing good, and meeting with evil returns; teaching the multitude in public, and returning into a desert place to pray; entering Jerusalem in triumph, as if about to take possession of a conquered city, and carried without its gates to die as a slave. Thus you see him going on in his various career; thus the Evangelists have set him before you in all possible situations. It is possible, therefore, for you, in all cases in which you can find yourselves, to say, "How did Christ act? What temper did he display? How did he encounter his difficulties? By what means did he fight those battles in which he obtained such glorious victories?"

Finally. *In the example of* JESUS CHRIST *we see the closest connexion between a life of holiness here, and a life of happiness hereafter.* The lustre and glory of these rewards are so great that we had need

look at his example, in order to encourage our hope of them. We see that He, "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Thus we are taught not to "be weary or faint in our minds," but to set Him before us, who "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." All the victories which he requires us to achieve he has himself exemplified and illustrated; and thus he has made his example as a seed which, through the influence of the Spirit, fructifies, and brings forth fruit, "in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred fold." In his own example he has shown how intimately conflict and victory are united; and hear what he says to the church of Thyatira: "He that overcometh and keepeth my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations (and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers), even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star." And to another church: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." When you contemplate the example of Christ, you contemplate the man of suffering and of sorrows, sitting on a throne of inconceivable glory. And as the sufferings of Christ were followed by a crown of immortal glory, so shall the sufferings which Christians endure for his sake. "It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." And what has he himself said? "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundred fold now in this time, with persecutions, and in the world to come, eternal life."

As so much time has elapsed, I shall proceed,

Secondly, *To offer a few directions to assist us in this imitation of the example of Christ.*

1. *Let us carefully distinguish between what is imitable and what is not.* There are some parts of our Saviour's conduct which it is not possible for us to imitate, and which were never so designed. We cannot work miracles; we cannot utter prophecies; we cannot forgive sins; we cannot atone for transgressors. These were prerogatives of Deity, and exercises of office; and they were prerogatives and offices which were exclusive. But, on one occasion, we find him saying, "Ye call me Master, and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you." Jesus Christ spake with authority; he attacked wickedness in high places, and denounced the just judgments of God with holy vehemence against an evil and adulterous generation. But even in those particular instances in which it would be imprudent, and even vain, to attempt imitation, there is yet an analogy which may be kept in view in our actions. In his

devotional spirit—in his holiness—in his love to God—in his diligence in duty—in his exertions to promote the Divine glory—in his tenderness for immortal souls—in his zeal to do those around him good—in his self-denying perseverance—in his tender charity, his generous love, his meekness, his patience, his forgiveness of injuries—in these, and all other moral excellences of his character, he stands before us for our study—our admiration—our imitation. Though we cannot work miracles like him, we may imitate his acts of mercy, his prodigies of benevolence; though we cannot prophesy, we may yet proclaim his truth, and make known his salvation; though we cannot forgive sins, we may yet pardon affronts and injuries; though we cannot die as atoning sacrifices for the sins of those around us, we may yet make many sacrifices for their sakes; and we may imitate his patience, his meekness, and suffer what befalls us for his sake, in the spirit in which he suffered. This we are taught by the apostle in our context: "Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example*, that ye should follow his steps." See what you have to endure, and arm yourselves with the same mind that was in him. Take your sufferings meekly, patiently, looking to him "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously;" who "was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," "leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

2. *Read with great attention the history of his life, and endeavour to engrave on your minds the sacred record of his actions.* I fear that many Christians are sadly defective here: they dwell much on the doctrinal parts of Scripture, they speculate on matters of doubtful disputation, and do not attend as they ought to the actions of Jesus Christ. Often read the history of Christ, and compare what you read with the writings of the apostles, and let the one explain the other. If you would imitate a perfect model, the perfections of that model must be familiar to you. Search the Scriptures; sit at his feet; look at his actions and temper; compare them one with another; mark their beauty, their harmony, their suitableness to circumstances, the adaptation of the whole to the great work which he came to do. And having it thus written on your hearts, you will find yourselves able to imitate him. But,

3. If Christ sanctified himself *by the Spirit*, and if through the Spirit he offered himself up without spot to God, then *ask for the Spirit*. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." You will never be able to act as Jesus Christ acted, unless you have his Spirit also. Let no man say, "I will imitate this great example: I will shake off what is wrong; I will do what is right:" in order to do all this, he must have the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ hath died for you; and you must believe in him to the salvation of your souls. Your hearts, depraved by nature, must be changed; the Holy Spirit must dwell in you, and influence your actions; then, and then only, will you be able to imitate Christ. The

foundation of a holy life must be laid in repentance and in lively faith; and all its exercises must be carried on in dependance on the Holy Spirit.

And, to conclude, *imitate the example of Jesus Christ in caring for sinners, and in love to perishing souls, and in sending forth the heralds of salvation to a perishing world.* Jesus Christ became the first preacher of his own religion, and then he sent forth his apostles to engage in the same work. Thus, the "great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, was confirmed also by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." In proportion, therefore, as you care for the souls of your fellow-men; as you send forth proper persons to preach the gospel to them; as you lend your time, your talents, your property, your influence, your counsels, to this great work; in proportion as you are aiming to propagate Christianity, in such proportion are you imitating Christ. Jesus Christ has now entered on his heavenly rest: but what is he doing? He rests, but not in inglorious ease: he rests, but he is still using every means to gather his elect from the four quarters of the world; he is still actively employed in beating down the kingdom of Satan; he is still aiming at the salvation, the holiness, the happiness of an "exceeding great multitude, which no man can number." Imitate this benevolent anxiety; look on the world sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, and send them forth the gospel of salvation. Thus you will be doing his work, preparing for his triumphs, increasing his satisfaction. Thus you are acting the part of him, who is emphatically termed "the Good Shepherd;" you seek diligently after the sheep that are lost, and bring them back with rejoicing. Thus you are instrumentally sending forth "the rod of his strength out of Zion," and aiming to bring men to the obedience of his will. Much has been done by these means, and more will be done, till "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill be made low;" till "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain;" till "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, as the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Before this great work all the concerns of the world die away, and are left at an immense distance. This is a grand concern, which may well occupy all our minds, and engross all our care. Ministers and private Christians are all employed in doing one work—a work compared with which all else has no value. Bear this sacred cause on your minds, Christians; assault heaven with your prayers, and Satan shall fall back before you. Remember that you are not alone in your prayers and intercessions: "He that searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." And there cannot be a more sure sign of a soul fully devoted to Christ, than an anxious desire that "all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of God."

XIII.

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.*

PSALM xcvii., 1: *The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.*

[Preached at Cambridge, May 9, 1802.]

IF we could suppose a person, without any acquaintance with the principles of religion, to be witness of the scenes of human wickedness, cruelty, and oppression—the prevalence of vice, of disorder, and calamity in the world—what, think you, would be the first wish of his heart? Would it not be, that some being of unlimited power and goodness would take the sceptre into his hands, and assume the government and administration of all things? But this is the very truth which the text declares—"the Lord reigneth"—and on which our present meditation and inquiry rests; so that we shall find there is in this reflection abundant reason for joy on the part of his intelligent creatures. "Let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of isles be glad." There are many events, appearances, and inequalities, which make the administration of God to appear dark and difficult to our apprehensions. This we are taught in this very Psalm—"Clouds and darkness are round about him." In requesting, therefore, your attention, my brethren, to this important subject, permit me, first, to point out some of those things which render the administration of God less plain to us. Secondly, that, notwithstanding this, it is sufficiently conspicuous, and shines through them all. Finally, this furnishes a most abundant source of thanksgiving and joy—"That the Lord reigneth."

First: I propose to point out some of those appearances which render us less sensible of the divine administration. The operation of second causes makes us less sensible of it. The great Supreme is accustomed to execute his plans and purposes through the intervention of second causes; so that we are apt to forget that hand through which all are produced, and on which all are suspended, until we have accounted, as we imagine, in some way or other, for their existence, without looking higher. Hence the greater part of mankind either rest in second causes, or deny the reality of his providence. But if we consider the matter properly, we shall see the same difficulties are found in the productions of nature, or the works of man, so that they will furnish no sort of objection to the subject; for either the Divine Being must act by second causes, or else the economy of nature and the faculties of man would have been created in vain, and all things would be performed without their intervention. This would be to set

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

his character as a ruler in opposition to his character as a creator; or, in other words, to set aside the dominion of God.

Secondly: The freedom of human actions and counsels is another objection that is raised against the truth of the text. We feel and know that we act for ourselves; that we are led to determine our own conduct in an infinite variety of circumstances; that we are not impelled contrary to our own choice and inclinations. We feel our independence in the consciousness that we act from our own impulse, and hence, though it may tend to obscure, yet it does not controvert the truth asserted; for we cannot fail to observe that there is great wisdom and benevolence controlling and leading on the order of events, and if the Divine Hand was more distinct and conspicuous, we should be overwhelmed as by a superior force. Whatever, then, of dignity there may be that distinguishes men from the brutes that perish, in this freedom of action which the Divine Being has given us, would be thus greatly impaired—a freedom which is so mysterious in its nature and its effects, and in the philosophy of its connexion and dependance.

Thirdly: The uniformity of events and occurrences is another obscuration of the government of God. We see events take place in an exceedingly uniform manner. The sun rises and sets; summer and winter, cold and heat, seed-time and harvest, succeed each other; similar causes everywhere produce similar effects; the same series of things is continually repeated; as Solomon says, "all things come alike to all." Fortunes are made by industry and perseverance; nations are raised to eminence by the arts and sciences; while, on the contrary, by the neglect of these means, both individuals and nations sink into insignificance and contempt. There seems, therefore, to be steadiness and constancy in the midst of change, and men think they have sufficiently accounted for every thing by the course of events; hence they have supposed the presence of a fatality which establishes this uniform order. This uniformity, however, is very far from disparaging the moral government of God; so far from its being a blemish or objection, it is a very great excellence, for if the seasons were constantly changing, every day and every moment bringing different things to our view, wisdom would be utterly useless; we should always be in a state of childhood, and nothing would remain but to commit ourselves to a dark and headlong torrent. It is evident that the regular succession of the seasons is a very great proof of divine wisdom and goodness, and from noticing these and similar circumstances of cause and effect, all practical wisdom springs; so that the extension of our observation is the extension of our knowledge: "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

Fourthly: The government of God is obscured by the great prevalence of vice and disorder, misery and injustice, that are in

the world. We are ready to suppose that, if the Divine Being governed the world, there would not be so many good examples neglected, so many benefits ill requited, so many crimes in high stations, so much oppressed virtue in low and miserable conditions. This is an argument which would not admit of a satisfactory answer, were it not for a divine revelation, that "God will judge the world in righteousness, and render to every man according to his work"—punishing the wicked and rewarding the good. Were this the ultimate state of man, and that the perfections of God were not such as we suppose them to be, it would lead us, as the heathen did, to erect gods like unto ourselves. But when we are told by revelation that this world is but a preparatory state, that we are here but a short time, that every one is hastening to an "account for the deeds done in the body," this difficulty vanishes, and, "though clouds and darkness are round about him," righteousness and judgment are the invariable habitations of his throne. Notwithstanding these appearances which obscure the providence of God, it often makes itself conspicuous in the midst of them all. When we have allowed to human agency, to human wisdom, and human power, a large circle of events imputed to nothing else, we see the Divine Wisdom frequently disencumber itself from all communication with second causes, and stretch itself out in the face of all men, in defeating and confounding the plans of human wisdom in the failure of the deepest schemes. How impossible, indeed, is it frequently to know that the wisest plans of men will take effect, because superior talents, or assiduity, or superior means of success, may be unexpectedly opposed to them; and how frequently events take quite a different turn from what the wisest persons ever foresaw or imagined. Battles are fought and determined by the slightest accident; the mistake of a word of command, or a wrong impression, or a sudden panic, that cannot be accounted for. The heathen world, conscious of this uncertainty, supposed a deity who delighted in change, that took a pleasure in sporting with the calamities of mankind; but the change in the order of events, which they called chance, is either the power of an Omnipotent Being, or nothing at all. On all those occasions, and others that might be enumerated, the happiness of man is affected by means entirely out of his own power, and how extremely numerous are such instances, the smallest attention must convince us. Human skill and industry produce much by the intervention of second causes; but there is a higher power on which success is dependant. For instance: the skill of man frames and builds ships, and they are launched on their voyage, but whether they are brought back in safety, or scattered by the gale, or become a prize to the enemy, depends upon Him whom "the winds and the waves obey."

Again, we see nations forming and assembling fleets; they depart, but whether they return with ignominy or success, or

supply the enemy with resources, or are sunk in the mighty deep, depends upon Him "who commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves of the sea, who maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." He frequently shuts up every avenue, and closes every hand but his own, that his power and wisdom may appear conspicuous.

Again, with respect to plenty or the fruitfulness of the seasons, his hand is necessary. We sometimes find there is a power which mocks and disappoints the hopes of man, and that can fill a whole nation with dismay. The husbandman casts his seed into the ground; but if the Lord pleases, he sends either cold or heat, or withholds the rain that should temper the earth, and whole nations are reduced to famine and misery. Again, whether as to health or sickness, how evident it is that we are dependant upon an infinite power. In one season general health prevails, so that every climate is equally salubrious; at another season there may be the element of death in a raging pestilence. He can awake "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, or the destruction that wasteth at noonday." He causes happiness and misery, that lie quite out of human reach. There is a secret spring which needs only to be touched by the finger of Omnipotence; so that the consideration of all these things unite to lead us to the consequence asserted in our text: "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of isles be glad thereof."

We may observe, again, that there are many remarkable deliverances God works out for his servants, in order to make bare the interposition of Providence, and to show to his enemies that there is a "God that judgeth in the earth." He writes deep moral lessons from the events of history, so that the history of the Church and the world is the history of Providence. Even in these later times, the conduct of God has been such as to make it exceedingly manifest that "the Lord reigneth;" so much so, that it cannot fail to lead every one to confess that it is "the finger of God." In former times many tyrants were united against the cause of God. There was a Nero, a Trajan, a Domitian, a Diocletian, monsters of iniquity,* who associated every form of persecution and cruelty, so that the Church was deluged with the blood of Christian martyrs, and all flesh failed before them; but sooner than the cause of Christianity should fail, God was pleased suddenly to change the scene, by placing a Christian emperor on the throne, and armed that very throne with universal power to protect that which it was formerly employed to destroy. How evident was this truth, that "the Lord reigneth!"

Again, when, after the celebrated Diet of Worms, the ban of the empire was published against Luther through all parts of

* In the severe persecution under Diocletian, from A.D. 270 to A.D. 304, which was the most extensive and furious of all, so many Christians suffered death, that the heathen boasted, in an ancient inscription, that they had effaced the name and superstition of the Christians.—DR. DODDRIDGE.

Christendom, supported by all the policy and pride of Rome, aided by all the civil power of the world, how impossible did it appear that the great Reformer should be delivered from the hand of his enemies—every avenue of escape shut against him, the whole civilized world armed in opposition to an obscure monk—yet God prepared a retreat from whence Luther sent forth books for the encouragement of his disciples and the advancement of the glorious cause of the Reformation.

And what, my brethren, can account for the existence of the Church itself through so many ages? What could have guided this little bark, scarcely visible on the ocean? What guarded or preserved it but the hand of God, "which taketh away the speech of the trusty, which maketh diviners mad, and wise men foolish, and bringeth the counsel of the wicked to naught? who straiteneth the nations and enlargeth them again?" Permit me to mention some of those events which God foretold, and has fulfilled, and which are distinctly recorded in the Scriptures. Though the truth of the histories in the word of God may be required to be supported by other evidence, yet, when we see coming to pass before our own eyes those secret events contained in it, they become the history of Providence, for there is scarcely any revolution in the Church or the world, but there is some prediction to be found of it in the sacred book.

We find in the word of God a sketch of those leading events which the Divine Being has thought fit to bring to pass, such as the downfall of all empires and kingdoms in Europe and the world, which is there clearly revealed. Infidelity, we are sure, never had such a source from whence to derive its weapons of defence; but the truth of the sacred record flashes, like lightning, through these successive events, or as the sun at the approach of day, confirming this experimental truth, "the Lord reigneth." It is putting his own seal to the truth of his own word. It is a providence that is not active at one time and asleep at another, but which takes away our notice from second causes, to lift up the veil, and display his own almighty arm, in order to make himself manifest.

In this light, we may consider prophecy and miracles as so many proofs of natural religion, and also as establishing that which is not their primary intention. Thus natural religion aids the triumph of Christianity, to the astonishment and confusion of its enemies.

These are views of our religion, my brethren, that we cannot too often meditate upon, as we are very often required to contemplate some sensible proofs of the divine government for the encouragement of our own hearts; for there is nothing of which we are more in danger, in the hurry of human concerns and the tumult of human passions, than to forget this truth, "the Lord reigneth." This we must frequently do in order to lead us to hope and to fear, that we may rejoice and be glad, and never

despair, as though no superior power reigned. Let us, therefore, frequently reflect on the evidence that we derive from miracles, and from prophecies in their fulfilment, that "the Lord reigneth."

Lastly, the abundant source of consolation which this truth furnishes. It affords three sources of consolation.

First. It gratifies and consoles the best feelings of the human heart. And what are these but compassion for the afflicted, pity for the poor and oppressed, a virtuous indignation at all injustice and violence, a tender concern for the Divine honour, a devout sorrow to discover any who are enemies to the best of Beings, to see his authority despised, his laws trodden under foot? But these feelings meet with very imperfect gratification in the indulgence of any hope of redress by human governments. There are innumerable oppressions which they cannot or will not correct. There are constantly recurring instances of violence and injustice which no human law has sufficient precision to define, much less sufficient energy to punish. This makes out a reason for the good man to be in love with justice and rectitude, and he is consoled with the thought that God, "the King of kings, and Lord of lords, reigneth;" that he executeth "righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

A good man sees, in many instances, the wicked triumphant; "he looks for judgment, but beholds oppression; for righteousness, but beholds a cry." Even in this Christian country he sees many crimes sanctioned by law. He knows there are multitudes of unhappy beings carried away captives from their homes and native country, loaded with chains, into slavery.* Though he were to entreat with strong cries and tears, he cannot stop this inhuman traffic, nor can he bring those audacious criminals to his bar; but he can look unto that "Lord who reigneth," and his virtuous indignation is sustained. He looks to that day when every one will gather blackness at the voice of Omnipotence calling for judgment, when he will afford to the oppressed a hearing for their complaints of justice perverted and laws trampled upon; and when his enemies will be put to silence. In that day when the "father of the fatherless, and the husband of the widow," will avenge their cause—for that time will come—the heavens will awaken into pity for the afflictions and oppressions they have endured.

Secondly. The doctrine of our text—the dominion of God—furnishes an assurance of the final happiness of the just. This is a most reasonable cause for satisfaction amid all the discouragements and afflictions of this life. By the just, I do not mean those that are satisfied with the superficial honours and possessions of this world, in the possession of mere morality, or nominal Christianity; but those who are truly devoted to the fear and love of God, making it their great care and concern to please him, who tremble at his word, who revere his majesty, and do his will; and though "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, shall pass away, *they* shall abide forever."

How is it possible, my brethren, that those who do the will of God

* This sermon was delivered long before the *slave* TRADE was made illegal.

should utterly fail? How is it possible, when the Father, the universal Ruler, has once enlisted them into his service, whose commands they obey, whose friendship is their solace, and who has all other beings in his hands and under his control? How is it possible but that they should triumph? For he hath said, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." In human governments, a wide distinction is made between enemies and friends. They are accustomed to make a great difference between those who are faithfully attached to them, and those who are secretly or openly disaffected. Can you suppose that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will make no distinction between "him that serveth him, and him that serveth him not?" Between "him that feareth, and him that loveth an oath?"

A good man, my brethren, knows "that he will return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked;" that he will put between them a lasting distinction: "For they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Yes, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the stars in the firmament of heaven, forever and ever." Then, apart from this earth, placed under the immediate smiles of their Father, united to Jesus Christ as their elder brother, placed before the throne of God and the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; crying, "with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Yes, my brethren, this is the great support of true piety; this glorious truth deeply impresses the hearts of true Christians; this keeps them steady to their purpose, and arms them against persecution and the fear of death; for they know that if God be Lord, they are not bound by the narrow limits of time or death; they have a possession and riches, bounded by nothing but the limits of eternity and the infinity of God.

Lastly, this subject furnishes the strongest assurance of the perpetuity, the enlargement, and prosperity of the Church of God in the world, which, next to the salvation of his own soul, is the first desire of a good man to see; when the will of God "shall be done on earth as it is in heaven;" to see that kingdom which Jesus Christ has foretold, and which is written in prophecy, established in the earth. We have seen some beginnings of this glorious day. Its dominion and perpetuity was first in the Saviour's heart, and occupied a chief part of his attention when on earth. To establish no other kingdom did God manifest himself to men: "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." For what purpose but this was the Roman power, which shadowed the earth, removed, and no notice taken of it but in the word of God? But the desire of all nations was to come, even the Messenger of his covenant, and God has given him the heathen for his inheritance, and all people are to serve and obey him. Earth

is to be turned into a nursery for heaven, a nursery for his kingdom, which every Christian has at heart. For we are assured by the word of God that it is his design this kingdom should be established, that it has been given to Jesus Christ in prophecy; and "hath he said, and will he not do it, or hath he spoken, and will he not make it good?" It is true, you see appearances dark and untoward, you see errors and wickedness every where prevail, but he has the "hearts of all men in his hands, and turneth them whithersoever he pleases." He can divert the counsels of princes, even as streams of water. He causes thrones to fall, and sets them up again; he "enlarges the nations, and straitens them again," and makes all creatures to submit to his hands. We are assured that religion will finally prevail, the wickedness of the wicked will come to an end, God shall establish the just, and the Church of God "shall arise and shine."

Let those, my brethren, who are attached to the cause of Christ, rejoice that "the Lord reigneth;" and since all events are at his disposal, let us lift up our voice, and give him no rest "till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep silence;" let us pray that he would "rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth," at the presence of that Spirit which first animated the universe, and which rested upon the apostles of his blessed gospel; for the residue of the Spirit is with him. "His arm is not shortened that he cannot save, nor his ear heavy that he cannot hear."

Finally, my brethren, let each of us see to it that we love him, and serve him, and seek an interest in his favour. "Let the Lord reign, let the earth tremble:" these words bear a different aspect to the righteous and to the wicked. "The Lord reigneth," they must perish. "The Lord reigneth," therefore piety is the highest wisdom, folly and vice the greatest madness; for it is madness to expect to succeed, or to be happy, in spite of him.

Look forward, my brethren, to those realms of glory and happiness prepared for those that love and serve him; "for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for those that love him," and wait for him.

XIV.

TRUST IN GOD, THE SUPPORT OF CHRISTIANS.*

1 Timothy, iv., 10: *Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach; because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe.*"

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, Feb. 5, 1829, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

Nothing is more powerful on the mind, in exciting pious desires, than the remembrance of the examples of those who, after a life of holy exertions, have received the stamp of immortality. Pre-eminent among these are the apostles of the Lamb, to whom we are indebted for all the light which we possess in reference to the mysteries of the gospel; and, among the apostles, pre-eminent is Paul. He is here addressing Timothy, whom he exhorts to set aside "profane and old wives' fables" (the Gnostic doctrines concerning demons), and to "exercise himself in godliness," in true piety; for "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." He then adds the stimulus of his own example, and reminds Timothy of the course of labours and sufferings which he had himself pursued, and of the ground by which he had been sustained in that course. "Therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach; because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe."

I. The course pursued by the apostle and his brethren was one of labours and sufferings.

His own labours are recorded in the Acts; they were greater and more varied than those of any other apostle. In addition to the work of the ministry, he laboured with his own hands, in order that he might be able to preach the gospel gratuitously. It is almost incredible that any one man could have done all that he did.

Besides labouring, he suffered reproach. The Jews were enraged against him for his opposition to their law, and his preaching to the Gentiles; they reproached him as an apostate, who had reversed his former steps. He was reproached at the same time by the Gentiles, whose apostle he peculiarly became. The philosophers at Athens ridiculed him, saying, "What will this babbler say?" To minds of such a character as his, reproach, accumulated from both these parties, must have been even more painful than bodily suffering.

Thus he lived in an element of reproach; contempt followed him wherever he went: he was held up as a disturber of the order of society. All this arose from the holy nature of that gospel which he preached, and which came into counteraction with

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

worldly interests and passions. There seems to be a peculiar hardship in suffering reproach for well-doing: but he regarded it as an honour conferred in the service of God. If we must be reproached, let us not, my brethren, be reproached for evil-doing, but for well-doing: let us not have conscience against us, exasperating our sufferings, but secure in our conscious integrity an adamantine guard.

II. What it was that sustained the apostle and his brethren in the course which they pursued: it was the principle of confidence in God. "We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe."

1. God is here regarded as "the living God;" that is, the true God, as distinguished from dumb and lifeless idols, described by the Psalmist as "having eyes that see not, ears that hear not, mouths that speak not, feet that walk not." God appeals to this distinction when He says, "As I live." This suggests the idea of the infinite perfection of the Deity, and, consequently, His ability to protect His servants.

2. As "the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe."

(1.) "The Saviour of all men." His mercies are over all His creatures: His power sustains and supplies even the evil, even the vessels of wrath, that fit themselves for destruction. His goodness prevails above His justice: He preserves men from death; renews their youth and health after sickness; it is of His mercies that we are not consumed.

(2.) But in a far higher sense He is "the Saviour of those that believe." He saves them from consequences far more awful than any temporal calamities. He sent His Son to save them from guilt, from an evil world, from the wrath to come: He prepares them by His grace for eternal glory. Wherever men believe the gospel, there God is reconciled to sinners; they are no longer strangers, but subjects of His heavenly kingdom; He delights to do them good; He rejoices over them with singing; He rests in His love of them!

Now from the first of these views, we infer that the power of God is pledged to assist His servants to do His will, and execute His commission; and, in whatever we do in obedience to God's will, we have reason to depend on the support of Him who has ordered it to be done. Whoever is standing fast in His warfare, and doing His service, may confidently cast himself upon His care; he is doing the will of the "living God."

And, in the next place, this may be especially applied to that part of God's will in which His glory is most concerned. In the gospel it is that the honour of God is most of all concerned; men are to be saved by believing the gospel; therefore, we may be confident that God will help them in all that relates to the success of the gospel: "He is the Saviour especially of them that believe." God has only one great work on earth, and that is the manifestation of His will and glory by Jesus Christ. "Let

Thy work appear to Thy servants, and Thy glory to their children!"* (Psalm xc.) He who has given His Son, He who gives His Spirit, will surely confirm His work, for which both are given. "He that spared not His own Son, will freely give all things" requisite to the success of that Church which His Son died to obtain.

Besides which, He has reserved, for those who believe, mansions in heaven; reserved for them an inheritance, which can be attained only by their being preserved unto it. He who has appointed the end, will not withhold the means; He will enable us to walk towards glory, to walk in the steps of Christ, to overcome as Christ overcame; having appointed glory, He will give grace also; grace here being the preparation for glory hereafter: "He who has begun a good work in us, will perform it unto the day of His coming." If we have only satisfactory evidence of our conversion to the Lord, we may rest assured that He will do for us all that is needed for our final salvation.

III. As improvements of this subject, observe,

1. How highly we should value that gospel which the apostles preached amid so much labour and suffering! Consider how much the gospel cost its first disciples, and how dearly, therefore, we should prize it! When David knew that the water offered to him had cost the life of those who obtained it, he refused to taste it, because it was the price of blood. And the apostles loved not their very lives, that they might send the gospel to us! But they knew what they did; they had counted the cost; they did not repent of the sacrifice. Hold fast, then, the truth which they have transmitted! Never think it of little moment what you believe—content with merely what you do! Never indulge the vain conceit that, if our conduct is consistent, it matters little what is our faith. Good works are doubtless necessary; but, to be good works, they must proceed from right principles. The great design of Jesus Christ is to justify and to sanctify His people: all depends upon that turning-point, the justification of a sinner before God; and this can be only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He came, at the same time, to purify for Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; to make us partakers of His holiness and of His Spirit. Unless this great design of the gospel be accomplished in us, it has left us where it found us, "dead in trespasses and sins!" Hold fast these vital points, in which all true Christians unite.

2. Imitate the apostles in their course of labours and sufferings. Be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The circumstances of Christians may vary; but the grand principle of piety never changes. If we are true Christians, we shall fight the good fight of faith; we shall suffer for the sake of God, and die daily. It is not necessary that we should be apostles or ministers; but we must prefer Christ to the world; we must carry our religion into

* This had been the text of the last preceding sacramental lecture. See Ser. XIX. in this vol

all the details of life, and let it influence every part of our human agency. Our piety must not be confined to the closet or the place of worship; in all things we must "exercise ourselves unto godliness."

3. And, lastly, as the apostles were supported by trusting in the living God, so shall we also be, if we follow their example. If we trust in God, His favour will be our joy; if not, His comforts will fail us. But let us not mistake the nature of this trust. In proportion as we depart from God, and suffer our hands to relax in His service; in proportion as we neglect the means of grace, or perform our devotions in a careless or perfunctory manner, our trust in God will be debilitated, our comfort will be clouded. Beware, my dear brethren, lest your trust in God be a dangerous presumption! For any one to trust in God while he goes on in sin, is awfully to deceive himself. We must cleave to the Lord, if we would rightly trust in Him; we must walk in the light of purity, if we would have fellowship with the Father and His Son; and then, in a very little time, we shall see the end of such a course! If we tread in the steps of the apostles, we shall be made partakers of their reward; we shall lose all remembrance of any light affliction, which is but for a moment, and shall only be amazed at our folly in not having had more respect to the recompense of eternity. The apostles do not now repent of their labours and sufferings. Let us walk nearer to God, and seek, by patient perseverance, for glory, honour, and immortality; let us be followers of those who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises; for to such, and such only, God will give everlasting life!

XV.

GOD THE PORTION OF THE SOUL.*

LAMENTATIONS, iii., 24: *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.*

Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, June 29, 1828.]

THE book of Lamentations contains the mourning of Jeremiah over the desolation of Jerusalem and the captivity of Judah. He has been called the weeping prophet, and he proves himself as much a devoted patriot as he was a distinguished prophet of the Most High; he bewailed the calamities of his country, which he could not repair. Yet, amid his griefs, he expresses the consolations of piety; a devout mind, even in the severest distresses, will find something on which to re-

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

pose with hope, something to awaken gratitude. Thus the prophet recollects, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not; they are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness." And then, in the text, he adds, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." In these words he probably speaks not so much in his own character as in that of the Church of God; he represents the devout part of the Jews. In considering these words, I shall direct your attention, first, to their general import, and then to those properties of the Divine nature and character which make God the portion of His people.

I. A "portion," as the word is here employed, denotes whatever constitutes the stable and permanent source of our chief enjoyment, as distinguished from an occasional and transient benefit. That which provides for the appetites and passions of an individual may be called his worldly portion. The prophet rests in God as his portion; places on God his expectation of good; concentrates all his hopes and affections, all the sentiments of confidence and complacence, on Him, and on Him alone. Other beings might administer to his relief, but God alone could supply his supreme good. This is what the wisdom of man so long inquired after in vain; the more thoughtful heathens wearied themselves in the search of the Supreme Good of man. Revelation has set this question forever at rest, leaving not the shadow of a doubt where this treasure is to be sought, namely, in God, and in His favour.

In a "portion," two qualities are requisite: protection from evil, and supply of good; it should be a shield to defend, and a sun to bless us: and "the Lord God is a sun and a shield; He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will He withhold." If every evil can be averted, every blessing afforded, it is a perfect portion; nothing more can be desired; every requisition of the mind is included here. But these two qualities are found only in God: He alone has infinite power to protect, infinite fulness to provide.

The words of the prophet imply that he had chosen this portion. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." Though God alone is fit to be the portion of any of His creatures, He is not such to any, unless they choose Him. Till He is fixed upon as such, and preferred to all besides, we have no part or lot in His favour and perfection. All that choose this Divine portion, first entertain such notions of His character, His administration, and their own need of His favour, as determine their choice of none beside. And when this choice is made, it is made with the whole heart; all the activity of the mind, all the powers of our nature, are well employed here: he that has turned to the Lord often retraces the course he has been led, often reflects with delight on the choice he has made; he never thinks of regretting it; the more experience of it he obtains, the more his satisfaction in it is confirmed; that this is his portion, his soul saith it; the only anxiety with him on the subject is, whether he has been sincere and cordial in making such an election: it never enters into his thoughts to doubt the propriety and wisdom of his choice: the consciousness of having

such a portion illuminates the future, while it cheers the present; the most enlarged and comprehensive expectations are justified by it; "therefore," says the prophet, "will I hope in Him."

II. In the next place, we are to consider those qualities in the Divine Being which recommend Him to us as our portion, and abundantly justify the choice which His people have made.

1. That only is fit to be the portion of any rational being which is congenial with the nature of the mind. There must be some affinity, some correspondence, between the object fixed on as the source of good, and the constitution and genius of the person who makes the choice. Now man is an incarnate spirit; he is not corporeal alone; he has a mind also; and this, confessedly, is the higher part of his nature. We have gratifications which belong to our imbodied state, but which are not suited to our soul. As "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty has given him understanding," reason and truth are required for his immortal part. That which is not fitted for his thinking powers can never be the portion of a thinking being. And, as we are spiritual, nothing that is not such can be our real good. The benefits and gifts of Providence are not sufficient; the Divine Being Himself is required to satisfy the desires of His people: they see that in His nature and character which alone can fill their souls. Many covet His favour, not Himself: they wish for such an interest in His favour as they are conscious is necessary to their safety, or such as may put them in possession of the creature: thus God is made an instrument for obtaining His own creatures! made, as it were, to lend His omnipotence for the very purpose of setting Himself aside! of substituting broken cisterns for the fountain of living waters! But the sincerely pious desire the communications of His holiness and love, as what alone can make them truly blessed. And, till we have such feelings and desires, we are strangers to the first element of the true knowledge of God.

2. The portion which we want must be one that can make us perfectly happy. Such is the vastness of the human mind, so immense the ardour of our affections, and the excursiveness of our imagination, that no creature can ever bestow our proper happiness. Man is always progressive; always figuring to himself new objects of hope and enjoyment: seeking after something beyond what he has grasped; the horizon is ever widening before him; and every new discovery only renders him capable of harassing himself with the pursuit of new possibilities of good. This is the law impressed on a never-dying spirit. Give a man all the world, he will not be satisfied; "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing;" the passions of sensuality, avarice, or ambition, are never satisfied by indulgence. But the Divine Being opens a field of joy in which we may expatiate to all eternity! for He is the original of all good; never can we exhaust the pleasures that arise from His power, directed by His goodness; pleasures which must satisfy every desire. In Him there is a scope for the widest excursions of the mind, the highest elevations of thought and feeling: in His favour and friendship there are un-

known possibilities of bliss ; " eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." " He is the dwelling-place" of all His people in all ages : there is room in Him for all. He who supplies all with natural good here below, fills, at the same time, all the heavenly beings with the eternal effluxes of His light, and love, and joy ! He is an immense, and therefore an adequate good to all.

3. A portion must be not only valuable in itself, but communicable to us. Many things may be admired which are not communicable ; they may be fit for others, yet not fit for us. But God is infinitely communicable : He has the disposition, and He has the power, to disclose Himself, to approximate Himself to His creatures. We all know how much man acts upon man ; how mind influences mind ; how we are affected even by a look, and, much more, by the intercourse of others ; how we are always either adding to, or diminishing from, the happiness of those around us, by the common powers of our nature. But the Creator and Father of our spirits has access to all the recesses of our minds. Jesus Christ said, " If a man love Me, he will keep My commands, and My Father will love him, and I will come and manifest Myself unto him ; and We will come and make Our abode with him." Do not conceive of the Divine Being as residing apart, the object of remote speculation ; no, my brethren ! He takes possession of the heart ; He fills the understanding with holy light ; He says of the devout soul, " This is My rest, for I have delight therein." " Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity : I dwell in the holy place ; with him also that is of an humble spirit ; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." " The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him : He manifests Himself to them as He does not unto the world." Religion may begin in fear ; but, as it advances, you will feel God to be the portion of your soul, and be able to say, " Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none on earth I desire beside Thee." And, after all, the utmost that believers experience here of Divine comfort is, they know, but the merest scantling of what is reserved for a higher state. They lose themselves in the anticipations of hope : assured that there is no sort of proportion between their present satisfactions and those that await them in heaven. Those who speculated on the Divine Being by the light of reason, never thought of appropriating Him as a portion ; this is the wisdom of the Church, and this the privilege of the saints !

4. A portion must be something present with us, something that we can bear about with us, and use whenever we desire. The safest haven is unavailing to him who is divided from it by tempestuous waves, and may be swept away in shipwreck before he can attain it. The best and wisest friend is of no avail to us, if we are separated from his counsel and comfort at the moment of need. We want a portion that may be always with us. And such a portion is God ! His presence is always near ; " He is not a God afar off, but a God that is nigh !" His ear is always open to hear, His hand always

stretched out to save us. He is a very present help in time of trouble—a very present help! His presence is not, like that of our human friends, confined to place; it may be every where enjoyed, and by all. As the stars, in consequence of their magnitude and elevation, are seen alike in places the most distant from each other, so God is the same to all His people; His presence is equally enjoyed by them in every scene.

5. That which is worthy to be our portion should be something unchangeable in its nature, not exposed to uncertain fluctuations. All things around us change: "all flesh is as grass;" all our human enjoyments vary from year to year; nothing continues long as it was; we are always losing some objects and gaining others; and one part of our life presents a perfect contrast to another. The boy despises the amusements of the little child, the man those of the boy, and old age looks back with indifference on what so deeply engaged the prime of manhood. The beautiful scenes of nature which we now behold will soon be changed, and summer give place to wintry cold and gloom. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." "The world passes away, and the lust thereof:" all things, like the waves of the ocean, are in a perpetual flux and reflux; and where we expected most, we are often most disappointed. But God is the same now as in all past generations: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Around Him, as the only fixed point, all creatures are ever changing and revolving, rising in creation, or falling in destruction; while He alone is imperishable amid all revolutions; and Jesus Christ, in whom He manifests Himself as the Saviour of them that believe, "is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

6. Lastly, a portion, to be perfect, must be eternal in its duration, capable of surviving every chance. Here the difference between God and all beside must be strikingly apparent to all. He that builds his hopes on God, builds on a Rock, the Rock of ages, that can never pass away. "The Eternal God is his refuge, the everlasting arms are his support."

7. And, once more, let me remind you, that in choosing God for our portion, we return to our ancient course, we reclaim and re-enjoy our original inheritance: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!" In calling us to fix our heart upon Himself, our heavenly Father only calls us back from our vain wanderings to our proper home; He only invites us, "as sheep that were going astray, to return to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." All that depart from God are doomed to chase shadows; to wander on in vain agitation and desire, without any real advance towards the object in view; like a person in a dream, that imagines himself always going forward, though he never moves. The Divine Being will abandon the creature that forsakes Himself to barrenness, disappointment, and remorse; He will darken the heaven above him, and seal up the springs of life and peace from his taste: "All that are far from Thee shall perish" (Psalm lxxiii.). When departed from God, you are lifted off from the centre of your being

And this restlessness of nature, this wretchedness to which you become a prey, this constant and vain effort to forget yourself in the pursuit of vanities, is only an indication of your fallen grandeur; a memento of your proper portion.

By way of a brief improvement of the subject: in the first place, let those be congratulated whose soul can say, with the prophet's, "The Lord is my portion; I will hope in Him." Who are the "blessed indeed," but those who are thus blessed in the "Only Blessed God?" Happy you! if such is your character and choice: "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of thy strength, and the sword of thine excellency; and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee!" Life and death, things present and to come, all forms of creation, must conduce to your happiness; for God, who is yours, is "above all, and through all, and in all:" and, in having Him, you have perfect security of possessing all things. You will bless the means, though perhaps of a painful kind, the minister or instrument, that first led you to God. Cleave, then, to your divine portion! let it never be suspected, by any symptoms of decline from this, that you have detected an error in your choice; that you have repented of a repentance never to be repented of! Continue to love Him, and He will come to you, and manifest Himself to you more and more. Should death overtake you, to die will be your gain: you will depart to be with Christ: "absent from the body, you will be present with the Lord;" you will exchange the vanities of time for the realities of glory: for "all things are yours!"

2. But there are others who have not made this choice: they may not have determinately refused it, but they have never seriously chosen this good part. And what can they expect, who have no relish for the friendship of God; who prefer any other object to Himself; who practically say to the Almighty, in the spirit of their daily conduct, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways?" Must there not be a congeniality formed between the heart and God, a susceptibility of His favour and love, to make us happy? Earnestly pray, then, "that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power in them that believe!"

And, since none can come to Christ except the Father draw him, pray that God would draw you to that Saviour who is the way, the truth, and the life! Break off all alliance with sin: retire within yourself, and ask your soul whether it will not be better for you, to all eternity, that you should choose God for your portion! If you think you can be safe without an interest in the Divine perfections; if you believe you can be truly and permanently happy without a participation of the Divine fulness, abandon yourself to a life of vanity and sense! But if, on the contrary, you are assured by all experi-

ence, as well as by the word of God, that you can be secure only in His protection, and satisfied only with his favour, which is better than life, give yourself up to Him as His property; choose Him as your portion, here and for evermore!

XVI.

SEEKING GOD.*

1 CHRON., xxviii., 9: *If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.*

[Preached at Cambridge, January 17, 1802.]

To find God is the greatest blessing that man can enjoy, for it is the great earnest of eternal life, which is, "*To know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*" More is included in finding God than persons in general imagine. Were many people in this Christian country to be asked if they had found God, they would be startled at the question, and exclaim, "How can it enter into your imagination that we have not found him?" But, if we consult the dictates of Divine revelation as well as our own experience, we shall see that it includes much more than a mere belief in his existence. The apostle declares, "*By this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments; and he that saith he knoweth Him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*" You see that, from the manner in which the Apostle John stigmatizes the persons he mentions as liars, that an acquaintance with God which is saving, *must* sanctify the heart and refine the passions. It is not, then, so common to find God as many persons imagine. Besides, the knowledge of God is said to be "*hid in Christ*," and we are assured that "*no man knoweth the Father but the Son; and he to whom the Son shall reveal him.*" The language of the Apostle Paul, who was such an adept in the school of Christ, is, "*God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.*" When the knowledge of God was communicated to Moses, it was veiled; but in Jesus Christ the veil is taken away; and now, without a veil, we behold as in a glass the glory of God, changing us into the same image from glory to glory. It is a transforming and sanctifying knowledge. The great object of that discovery relates to the stupendous plan of man's redemption, through Jesus Christ. The gift of so ineffable a person shows our immortality, and stamps an unspeakable grandeur upon our nature. It manifests the greatness of that love from which it proceeds, while the death of Jesus Christ displays the malignity of sin, and the purity, the holiness, and the depths of the

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

Divine character. It is not so much intended to discover his natural as his moral perfections—his holiness—his justice—his mercy. The love of Christ in particular ratified and revealed his mercy; and by it we see the infinite value of all those mercies which are conferred on true believers. They who are convinced of their misery and unworthiness, by faith in him receive justification, and are made heirs of eternal life. They are brought nigh to God; have peace with him; enter into covenant with him; renounce the dominion of sin and concupiscence, and pass their lives in the holy works of righteousness, having "*fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*" From that distance in which they were originally, they are brought into nearness to God, and look up to him in the same way as an affectionate child regards his parent, whose tenderness and care form the chief part of his felicity. While others are speculating about religion, these individuals have found, and are enjoying it; while others are entertaining themselves with ingenious notions and maxims, these are "*come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to God the judge of all.*" By being united to Jesus Christ, they have their portion with him. Considering this present state as but a journey, they solace themselves with portions of his presence and of his Spirit; and thus he gives them such manifest tokens of himself that they are imboldened to look up to the majesty of God, as both His God and their God, his Father and their Father: *this* is to find God.

We shall consider from these words, First, *The necessity of seeking God;* Secondly, *The manner in which it is to be accomplished.*

If the blessing of finding God is of such importance, as connected with the hope of eternal happiness with Him, why are there so few persons that will seek it? The answer is easy: because there are so few in comparison that are willing to be *earnest.* The advantages, indeed, are infinite; but they can only be secured by the greatest ardour in the pursuit. "*If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest for her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.*" This assiduous search, my brethren, is not common. Conscience will sometimes admonish as to the necessity of it, but these impressions soon subside; or they proceed till their efforts become so feeble that men are ready to imagine there is nothing but fanaticism in all such pretensions. But the Scripture asserts they are attainable. Let none suppose otherwise because he has not found them; but let each one ask himself if he has lifted up his voice in prayer for their bestowment. We have lost, my brethren, by the fall, that instinctive and lively sense and influence of God which confined our first parents within the limits of duty, and are now in a state of alienation from God. The great design of revelation is to bring men back to Him; hence Jesus Christ is the repairer of our misery: He speaks "*peace to them that are nigh, and to them that are afar off,*" and makes them one with God. He might have manifested

himself to the children of men in such glorious light that none could have overlooked Him; or He might have concealed himself in such darkness that none could have seen Him; but He has chosen a middle course. These things, the great things of Christianity, are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to those who are called, in Scripture, babes: "*Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*" If the Divine Being had acted otherwise, it would have infringed upon the perfections of His nature; but He has communicated His majesty and His mercy in tempered beams. If He had forced himself upon His creatures, he would have infringed upon His majesty; but He has communicated such portions of light as shall guide the serious and humble inquirer, and, at the same time, perplex those who want a pretext for forgetting Him. As this is the case, real happiness is only attainable in consequence of serious inquiry, which begins with the conviction of the vanity of every thing else but God.

We must seek Him *humbly* and *perseveringly*. Prayer is a duty, which men were instructed by the light of reason to receive as such; but it was reserved for the gospel of God to show its efficacy. The scope of all Scriptural language is, "*Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened: if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask Him!*" When was prayer ever employed in vain? It may not be immediately answered; but those who sincerely seek after God are in the way to find Him; in the way to happiness; *their* path is like the shining light, shining brighter and brighter to the perfect day. He is to be found by a serious perusal of His word; not merely to become conversant with its histories and critical difficulties, but to obtain a guide to eternal life. It is to be regarded as a lamp, which God has put up in the firmament of heaven, to direct us in the way of peace. "*Search the Scriptures*" is the injunction of our Lord, "*for they are they which testify of me.*" They are as a field in which the treasure is hid; and they who read them with meekness will be made "*wise unto salvation.*"

Again, *an attendance upon all the means of grace* is implied by seeking God. He has so incorporated the use of means with the blessing, as to put it out of the power of the wisest men to determine where the one terminates and the other begins. "*If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee;*" but then it must be seriously, humbly, earnestly, and perseveringly. Seek Him as for hidden treasure; but hidden treasure will never be sought while you suppose you have no need of it. It is strange to hear persons speak of the doubts they have respecting the Scriptures, while they perhaps never devoted a day to the serious perusal of them. If the most uninformed person in this assembly lifts up his voice in prayer, he will find that peace of mind which passes all understanding; that humble confidence in God, compared to which all the wisdom of philosophy is worse than nothing, and vanity. This is the only world, my brethren, in which it is probable we shall have to seek God. In hell, it will not be necessary to seek after God, for there the terrors of his justice and wrath will make Him manifest.

In heaven, it will not be necessary to seek Him, for there the beatific vision will make Him all in all. Here, it is possible to miss the road of happiness, and not find God; but by attending to the still small voice of conscience, we shall be led to find Him. This is a state of probation: it is possible, then, to miss God, and it is possible to find Him. If the great truths of religion were to appear so manifest as to overcome at once all difficulties, it would not have been so much a duty to inquire after Him; whereas, now He is "*the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*"

Who can comprehend, my brethren, how awful it must be to be cast off from God? It is to lose all interest in His power; to lose all interest in His wisdom; to be nothing to God, and God to be nothing for us; to have Omnipotence engaged against us; to sink into that state which cuts off from happiness. You are not conscious how much God is now doing for you, while you are forgetting Him; but then you will feel your dependance upon God, by losing all those springs of blessedness which you now find in Him. There is a period of respite for sinners. He does not immediately cast them off; but His purpose is fixed. In the mean time, He waits to be gracious; He furnishes them with a variety of privileges; He feeds and clothes their bodies, as well as feeds their souls; gives them friends, and by secret ways guides them through life, and sometimes opens the graves for their friends about them, to remind them of immortality. By His providence, and by the secret strivings of His Spirit, it is evident, my brethren, that He has not cast *you* off. You young men, He has not cast you off forever! He is awakening that compunction for your sins which I trust you now feel, which, if attended to, will lead you to happiness and to God. If you choose the path of the patriarchs and of your pious parents, it will lead you to the heavenly country; but if you forsake Him, He *will* cast you off forever. "*As I live, saith the Lord, I will lift up my hands and swear that I will execute vengeance upon mine enemies.*" He now waits to be gracious; but if the season is not improved, He will cast you off; He will "*swear in his wrath, Ye shall not enter into my rest.*" Providence will no longer furnish you with its bounties; the sleep of security will be at an end; the vain dance will come to an eternal pause. There will be no more vain and dissipated society for you, no skeptical books, no lascivious passions to enable you to forget God and forget your misery. How awful will it be to "*fall into the hands of the living God!*" Yes, my brethren, "*if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.*" The means of grace will be at an end. There will be no more Sabbaths to create a pause amid the hurry of life, and to prepare you for eternity. There will be no longer any preaching of that word, which, instead of softening, has hardened, and made you insensible; no example of pious parents, no more any attention paid to you, either by God or man; because the destinies of all will be fixed, when God shall have "*cast you off forever.*" The parable respecting the master of the house coming to reckon with his servants was intended not so much to terrify as to convert us. "*Then shall the King say to them*

on his left hand, Depart, ye workers of iniquity, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Some, we are told, will say, "*Lord, have we not eaten and drank in thy presence? but he will say, I never knew you. . . . There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;*" for at that awful time, "*the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.*" How dreadful will then be the recollection of those checks of conscience which were disregarded, those warnings which were deliberately despised, those movements of the Spirit which were resisted, those parental admonitions which were neglected, when men were taking pains, as it were, to break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from them! Painful recollections at that period will be as "*the worm that never dies.*" It is not, my brethren, that we take any pleasure in setting before you these awful truths; it arises from the regard we have to your eternal interests; we wish to prove ourselves faithful to God. These are the truths of Jesus Christ, which He has consecrated by His own lips, in order to divert persons from the path of ruin. God may not yet cast you off; but, depend upon it, the day will arrive when all who have refused the offers of the gospel will be so rejected. He may now determine to withdraw the strivings of His Spirit from you. Your path, indeed, may be tranquil, and you may have no changes; your riches, and luxuries, and every thing about you may put at a distance all serious thoughts of God, and a guilty peace may seem to secure you when the awful prediction of Jesus Christ shall be realized, "*Behold, I come as a thief in the night.*" You may be saying, Peace, peace—you may be saying you have escaped danger; then your destruction will come suddenly upon you, for your security is merely the security of persons lulled into repose, and the surprise ultimately occasioned is represented in the words, "*I come as a thief in the night.*"

Let each of us remember to seek after God with all our hearts, for they alone are happy who have found God, or are seeking Him. As to those who deliberately turn their backs upon religion, in spite of all the evidences of Christianity, and who deliberately live in a way that God condemns—the deeper they reflect, the more they will find that, if Jesus Christ tells the truth, they must at last lift up their eyes in torment. Delay not, therefore; we would say to such, "*Now is the accepted time.*" The offers of the gospel are *now* made to you. You do not know that they will be repeated. None of us know but that this may be the last time. Secure the blessings of eternity, and apply your hearts unto wisdom. Jesus Christ is saying, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, let him open the door, and I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.*" Let us not receive the grace of Christ in vain, but secure to ourselves that title to immortal life, of which neither things present nor things to come, of which neither life nor death can deprive us; for what can destroy your felicity, if built upon such a secure and immutable foundation? Let such as are seeking God, and have not found immediate peace and comfort, go on. While you continue in the serious, persevering use of praying and reading the Scriptures, by following on you

shall know the Lord. Your fears will soon be all dissipated; for you are going to the regions of light, and are quitting the regions of darkness. While others are pursuing the road to misery, the true Christian is rising above his troubles. Jesus Christ has promised that you shall overcome: He will secure you by his Spirit, uphold you by his hand, and pour unutterable glories upon you above the skies.

Will you then, my brethren, seek after God, or will you seek your all below? What is that honour or wealth for which you are seeking? If it be riches, then place those riches on high, where you can ultimately find them; but let them be the true riches. Place them in Jesus Christ, then you place them as high as God himself; and before you can be deprived of them, He must himself undergo a change. "*If thou seek Him*," then "*He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, he will cast thee off forever.*"

XVII.

PRIVILEGE OF BOLDNESS IN APPROACHING GOD.*

HEBREWS, x., 19–22: *Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high-priest over the house of God, let us draw near; having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, March 6, 1828, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

THE gospel is more glorious than the law: retaining all its advantages, with a great accession to them, while all its imperfections are removed. The dispensations of God, in grace, as well as in providence and creation, are successive; in the gospel He has put the finishing hand to the display of his wisdom and grace: whatever we can desire, either as an incentive to piety or a support under the evils of life; whatever conduces to holiness and hope; all is completed in Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith. In the former three verses of the text we have a view of the privilege enjoyed by Christians; in the last verse, the improvement of that privilege, as an incentive to piety.

I. The privilege enjoyed by Christians; holy boldness in our approaches to God. By "the holiest" we may understand the celestial tabernacle, which was typified by that part of the temple. The word rendered "boldness" has particular reference to liberty of speech, and here to that freedom in prayer with which all devout Christians are familiar; such a freedom as belongs to children, and not to servants;

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

belongs to those who are not only accepted, but adopted by their Father; whom He invites not only in mercy, but in love; who are regarded as members of Jesus Christ, of his very flesh and bones; brethren of the beloved Son.

This boldness consists of "reverence and godly fear." This the angels in heaven have in a degree far surpassing the saints on earth; they veil their faces, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty;" yet they are full of love, which expels all servile fear.

"By the blood of Jesus." This alludes to the sacrifices, and especially to the blood sprinkled, on the great day of atonement, by the high-priest within the holiest, sprinkled on the mercy-seat; but none beside might enter there; in token that access to heaven, the abode of the Eternal, was not yet prepared by the offering of Jesus Christ. That tabernacle was a figure of the true tabernacle, and Jesus Christ, "the minister of the true tabernacle," has passed into the heavens for us. Heaven, therefore, appears to be denoted by the holiest.

This does not imply, as some have thought, that the ancient saints did not go to heaven at their death, as Christians do, but that they attended Christ thither at his resurrection. There seems to have been no real difference, as to the ultimate approach to God, between them and us; but merely as to the present spiritual approach, which was to them less clear and free, on account of Jesus Christ not having then appeared and shed his blood, as He has now done. Hence they suffered fears which are now removed; as the pious Hezekiah dreaded death. Jesus Christ has delivered his people from the bondage of this fear of death, which reigned before his appearance. They were kept, under the law, in a state of non-age, pupilage, and servitude: "but when the fulness or the fitness of time was come, God sent his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father."

This boldness, then, consists in a filial freedom of approach to God, like that of a child to a parent; confiding in paternal regard, and in pardon for his offences, as from a wise and affectionate father. Christians become sons and daughters of the Almighty, joint-heirs with Christ, sealed with the Spirit of adoption; they open wide their mouths, and are filled; knowing that He is willing as well as "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think."

"By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." The veil of his flesh, not whole, but torn, rent, lacerated, to let out his precious blood: as He is the Bread of life, not whole, but broken, bruised, and smitten of God for us. This rending of the veil of his flesh was typified by that which took place in the veil of the most holy place at the time of his death. "A new way;" a way unknown to the wisdom of man, and hidden, for the most part, from the ancient saints. "A living way;" a way in which we are made to live before God; "because I live, ye shall live also." "I give unto My sheep eternal life."

"And having a High-Priest over the house of God." By the house

of God the Church is sometimes meant; but here it probably denotes heaven. Jesus Christ ministers in heaven itself: there He exercises his priesthood, there He presents his blood, there He pursues his intercession. And this is the grand foundation of the Christian's confidence, that he has a High-Priest who filleth all things; one of a Divine nature and dignity: one who, instead of all other sacrifices, offered Himself as the end and crown of all: by Himself He purged our sins, not by the blood of animal victims: other priests offered first for themselves; but He had no need, being "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." They were ever changing, they followed each other like shadows, and they were but shadows; He the eternal substance: their offerings had no virtue of their own to remove an atom of guilt; his one offering of himself, once for all, has forever perfected them that are sanctified. Before his coming, there was a dimness on the minds of believers as to their eternal prospect; but now that He has himself entered into heaven, He has brought immortality to light; no cloud remains; they also shall enter with Him into the eternal city. Such a sacrifice was required for such guilt as ours. It became Him, of whom are all things, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

II. The improvement. "Let us draw near—with a true heart." All approaches to God must be made with this, with a sincere desire of his favour and blessing; without this, the best-conceived prayer would be a mockery of God. "And in full assurance of faith," as regards the power and the willingness of Christ to save us. He that doubts, as James declares, shall receive nothing. We may be permitted to doubt, indeed, of some things; we may doubt of our state before God; such doubting may be the consequence of a low degree of grace and a laxity in our walk; but we are not permitted to doubt of Christ's ability and readiness to save.

"Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." This alludes, I suppose, to the sprinkling of blood on the day of atonement, as before mentioned: it was not enough that the blood was shed, it must be sprinkled; this was an essential part of the sacrifices: it represented the blood of Christ on the cross. Thus the blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled on the door-posts, that the destroying angel might pass by those houses. This denotes our justification by faith in the death of Christ for sin. Faith in this is indispensable. If Christ is bread to the soul, that bread must be eaten; "His name, through faith in his name," can alone give us perfect soundness in spirit before God. By "an evil" is meant an accusing "conscience;" filled with fear that hath torment. There is an allusion here to the sprinkling of those who were ceremonially defiled, as by the touch of a dead body: the contact of sin has a real taint, which must be purified, in order to our having peace with God; and this peace flows from the blood of Christ.

"And our bodies washed with pure water." The ashes of the heifer were mingled with clear water, and this was sprinkled on the face of the person ceremonially defiled. As the ashes marked the blood

of Christ, so the water marked the influence of the Spirit. Water is similarly significant in baptism. Water and blood came from the side of Christ, as John saw and testified; denoting at once an atoning sacrifice and a purifying Spirit. "Our bodies," our whole persons; it must be an entire purification. "I beseech you, present your bodies." We are to receive the sanctifying influence on the whole of our nature. Having, therefore, all these encouragements, "let us draw near." What should hinder such from drawing near? Is it not a glorious privilege for a guilty creature thus to approach God? and shall we not avail ourselves of it?

"Let us draw near" in prayer, in private devotion; often let us be asking for pardon, guidance, support. Every day we should have much to do with God; we have greater concerns to transact with Him than with all the world beside; He is emphatically *that* Being with whom we have to do! And we have open and full access; we need not come in a servile, trembling posture; we may come with boldness, as to a Father, led by the hand of an elder Brother; sustained by a sacrifice of infinite virtue, that looks backward to the whole Old Testament Church, and forward to the last believers under the New. And not only in moments of stated devotion, but in any moments, in the midst of business and crowds, we should often draw near to God: thoughts are quick, conceptions rapid: nothing need keep us long from prayer.

"Let us draw near" to God in public worship also; being glad to hear the call, let us go to the house of the Lord; strengthen each other by united devotion; and never forsake the assembling of ourselves together. What solemnity should pervade this worship! "How awful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

"Let us draw near" to God in heaven—in the holiest itself, where He manifests His beatific presence, where God Himself is all in all! where you shall be made pillars of His temple, and go no more out forever and forever!

And, finally, "let us draw near" to Him in the holy communion. Hear His gracious invitation, "Eat, oh friends; drink abundantly, oh beloved!" A feast of heavenly provisions for the hungry and thirsty after righteousness. "Let us, therefore, draw near with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith."

XVIII.

THE SECRET THINGS OF GOD.*

DEUT., XXIX., 29: *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

[Preached at Cambridge, March 14, 1802.]

IN the former part of this chapter, Moses solemnly reminds the people of Israel of the covenant which God had made with them in Horeb, and contrasts the obligations they were under to the service of God, and the character of His worship, with the stupid idolatry of other nations, assuring them of the awful judgments that God would bring upon them if ever they revolted from him. He knew, by the spirit of prophecy, that this would in fact be the case, until they should be cast out of their own land and scattered into all countries, but checks the inquiry that would naturally arise from this subject; he checks himself, if I may so speak, by inculcating this important maxim, that any attempt to explain the secret things of God would be only gratifying their curiosity. It is as if he had said, You may be certain that, in the counsel of God, things are wisely kept back from view; and it is not for you to look into them, except so far as he has been pleased to lift up the veil.

The maxim which Moses here laid down is useful to various purposes. I shall apply it to the three following: to the decrees of God, the mysteries of Christian truth, and the concerns of human life.

I. The maxim here laid down may be applied, with great propriety, to *the purposes and decrees of the eternal mind.* Here is a part revealed which belongs to us and to our children, and a part which belongs to the Divine Being. Reason and Scripture both unite in ascribing to God infinite wisdom—a wisdom exercised over the works of his hands, which continually presides and governs. All things are represented as ordained according to the counsel of the Divine will. It is not a mere eye that surveys, but it is a contriving wisdom—the wisdom of a ruler and a father. This is continually ascribed to God, and a just conception of it is at the very foundation of religion. The devices of man's heart must be abased. "*He*," says Job, "*performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with him.*" Here is a path revealed, and a path that is secret, but perfectly consistent with man's designs as a free agent, though covered with obscurity until ripened into the event. Very few of the purposes

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

of God are made known and this compels his creatures to say, "*Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught Him?*" It is evident, then, that the secret purposes of God ought never to be made the ground of action: they do not belong to us, because we cannot tell that they are absolutely determined until the step is taken. Were it otherwise, the prudence of man would be set aside by the plans and purposes of God, whose proceedings would be inconsistent with human agency. Besides, it is very absurd to choose to walk by an obscure light, when a clear one can be obtained. Let no sentiment of fatality, then, have any influence over you in the choice of your actions; for both reason and revelation clearly mark out the rules of duty and the principles of morality.

Another reason to be assigned why the decrees and purposes of God cannot belong to us, but to the Lord our God, is, that they are formed on views and purposes suited only to an infinite mind, and, therefore, would not be safe grounds for human action. They are fit for Him, so far as they are to be performed in the course of his providence, but not for his creatures to accomplish. The same event with his views and purposes may be good and necessary, which, with respect to human agency, may be wicked and abominable. It was fit that the Son of Man should die for the sins of the world; but, notwithstanding, we are told that it was "*by wicked hands He was crucified and slain.*" The purposes of God can never be the proper ground of action, because they are not the things that are revealed, which only belong to us and to our children; they are the secret things which belong to God. There *is*, indeed, a path revealed; and this is devoutly to acknowledge the Divine Being, to take refuge in Him in every time of trouble against the doubts and fears of our own hearts—against the skepticism excited by the seeming confusion of human affairs; and this is the proper use and improvement of the doctrine of the text. The rules of duty are made simple, and the avenues of piety are infinite, so as to leave no room in which the way is not clear for it to shine and manifest itself. The Divine knowledge strips us of that which is selfish and fantastic, and tends to place us at his footstool with the Apostle Paul, and to cry out, "*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! . . . For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things.*" Part, then, is revealed, which belongs to us and to our children, and a part to God; but the principal part belongs necessarily to God, and, therefore, that ought not to determine us, or to have any influence in our actions.

II. This maxim of Moses may be usefully applied to *the mysterious truths of Christianity.*

That there are mysteries, must be confessed by every one who attends seriously to the Divine word. There are many things in religion which transcend our capacities, but there is nothing con-

tradictory. To transcend is one thing, to contradict is another: this would amount to imposture. Not to enter, however, largely on this subject, suffice it to touch on three things.

1. The union of the Divine and human natures in our blessed Saviour. This is a very great mystery, a truth that far exceeds our conceptions—nothing more so; yet there is nothing contradictory. There may be many occasions on which, with infinite propriety, God and man may become united. This is conceivable; and that they were so united is evident from the word of God. Jesus Christ had distinct attributes; he had the weakness of man and the dignity of God. We find him expiring in weakness, yet "*upholding all things by the word of his power.*" There are some persons who either assert the humanity of Christ under pretence of denying his dignity, or maintain his dignity under pretence of denying his humanity; and thus, when we go from general truths to account for particular parts, we are at once lost. The way to avoid this, is to assign secret things to the Lord our God, and those that are revealed as inestimable proofs of love, and for our comfort, to us and to our children.

2. That Jesus Christ was sacrificed for the sins of the world is as plain, to a simple understanding, as any truth in the word of God; yet all the questions that may arise in a curious mind respecting it cannot be answered: for instance, whether the death of Christ was absolutely necessary for the atonement of sin? why it was no sooner offered? why it was no more extensive, so as to embrace and benefit all mankind? These are questions which do not affect the general truth; they are connected with the secret things which belong to the Lord our God: but the fact itself of the death of Christ—that "*He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures*"—belongs to us and to our children.

The doctrine of the atonement is a most essential part of holy writ, importing that Jesus Christ is "*the Way, the Truth, and the Life;*" the Way to the Father, the Victim upon whom all our sins are laid and are to be confessed. This is the right and main spring of genuine contrition, producing right sentiments towards God: "*No man cometh unto the Father but by Him.*"

3. The agency of the Divine Spirit upon the mind is a truth which, in one sense, belongs to us and to our children, and, in the other sense, belongs to God. None can deny it to be possible that a spirit should have access to man, when he recollects that "*God is a Spirit,*" and "*the Father of spirits,*" and therefore more nearly allied to our spiritual than material part, and is present in all the active powers of matter. Is it not strange that any man should deny the probability of this great agency? "*that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" But do you wish to know the manner in which this influence is exerted and maintained? Do you wish to know the exact *line* of separation between human action and the agency of the Spirit? where the one begins and the other terminates? These are questions which we cannot

solve. Our Lord, in speaking upon this subject to Nicodemus, compares the operations of the Spirit to the wind: "*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" But does this mystery prevent a pious Christian from imploring the influence of the Spirit? Ask the man who believes the doctrine of Providence, does it diminish his sense of the Divine government and protection because he cannot understand it? And if we never think of abandoning our dependance upon God because we do not know how, or in what manner, it comes, as it were, into contact with God, why should we do so on account of this mystery?

4. The resurrection of the dead is revealed to us as a fact in general, and it is a source of unspeakable satisfaction to the Christian that "*this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality,*" and that "*death shall be swallowed up in victory;*" but the circumstances that will attend this great event—in what manner our spirits will act in a separate state, or the nature of their enjoyments when reunited to the body, or the difference between them and the bodies we now possess—are questions which lie involved in obscurity; they are not "the things that are revealed." If you say, "*How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?*" the Apostle Paul condemns such an inquiry: "*Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest is not that body which shall be:*" but "*God giveth it a body as it shall please him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. . . . It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*" On this part of the subject, my brethren, I would remark, that we should have such a sense of the unspeakable goodness and wisdom of God as to make us satisfied with just so much as He has taught us, and not expect, as there are so many mysteries in nature, that there should be none in religion, or in that which affects man in his spiritual state. Be thankful for the light you have received, and be content with the things that are revealed, which belong to us and to our children.

III. This maxim may be nowhere so fully applied as *in the concerns of human life.*

In the concerns of human life there is a path that is secret, and a path that is revealed. Life may be considered either as a series of events and circumstances, ordained and managed by infinite wisdom, or as a course of actions left to the determination of human choice. Considered in the first point of view, there is nothing more obscure, nothing more hidden from our knowledge, than human life; but, in the other, as a set of actions and

a course of behaviour, there is nothing more plain, for we have the rules and motives that on every occasion ought to influence us. The *matter* of life is obscure; but the *morality* of life is exceedingly plain and intelligible. Nothing is more profound than that darkness which covers every step of our path. We know not what a day will bring forth, nor the consequences of our actions; for it is said, "*In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that.*" You may confer a benefit, and you know not whether it will conciliate or exasperate; whether it will produce gratitude or ingratitude. You may pursue the wisest plans of human prudence, but, perhaps, foolish plans would have succeeded better; or you may become entangled in a complicated web of your own contrivance. You see the immediate effect of your actions, but remote consequences are removed far from your view; you know not the good or evil that may follow. You know not whether you shall have health or sickness; whether you shall have joy or sorrow, prosperity or adversity. You may be surprised when you think yourself most secure; or, when involved in the greatest distress, unexpectedly delivered; or you may be saying, in the fulness of riches, "*Soul, take thine ease,*" when you are about to be plunged into intolerable agony. We are apt to imagine that we are the principal actors on the stage of life; but, by the destruction of some individuals, Providence is showing us that there is an unseen Hand that changes the scene and darkens the theatre at his pleasure; and thus there is a secret path which belongs to God, while the conduct of life belongs to us.

The rules of duty are plain and clear; the issue of events is in the hand of God, because he alone knows them. You know not the time of your death, nor the manner of your death—whether in the midst of life and happiness, or when sunk under a burden of agony and infirmity—whether it will be among your friends, or alone in the wilderness. These things are all sealed up under the hand of God, and placed among his darkest secrets. But you know how to make your death happy; you know what course of life will leave you little to dread; you know the prospect beyond the grave; and you know that Christ says to his disciples, "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*" Thus, my brethren, the humble Christian knows, in the midst of all the obscurity of his path, whither he goes, "*and the Way he knows.*"

I shall make two observations before I close. *In the first place*, we see here the maxim that ought to regulate our zeal with respect to religious truth; namely, to direct it to those things that are revealed, and in proportion to the plainness with which they are revealed. The want of this distinction has been a fruitful source of dispute among Christians, and has furnished much food for speculation. Either the subjects of dispute have not been revealed at all, or very obscurely so. The effect of this has been to produce a kind of wrathful religion and animosity, to the

neglect of the things that are revealed. For instance, when men dispute about the purposes and decrees of God, and attempt to reconcile them with human agency; or when, instead of lamenting the apostacy of man from God, they invent theories to account for the origin of evil; this is "*darkening counsel by words without knowledge.*" All that we know about the origin of evil is, that God sowed good seed, and an enemy sowed tares. When subtle distinctions are set up instead of the plain will of God, we lose ourselves in a labyrinth. It is as if a man were to examine his food with a microscope, instead of eating it; he has no desire for the sincere word of God as the food of the mind, that he may grow thereby. Let it ever be remembered, that the religion of Jesus Christ was intended for poor men, and was not intended as the religion of scholars. It is adapted to the weakness of their faculties; affording them a light that is steady, yet not so effulgent as to dazzle; teaching them the truths of the gospel as facts, and hiding them as mysteries.

In the second place, it may be necessary to remark, as another improvement, that this maxim of Moses strongly condemns that anxiety with respect to futurity which is almost innate in the human mind; but when indulged too much, as it is very apt to be indulged, is a great enemy to our peace. Fix it, then, my brethren, in your minds, that "*the Lord reigneth*," that "*his hand stretcheth over all;*" that the things which are secret belong unto Him; that they are the prerogative of that Being who "*searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins*" and the "*imagination of the thoughts;*" that "*his counsel must stand, and He will do all his pleasure.*" It frequently happens, even where we are not personally interested, that many persons feel a strange curiosity about others. When the Apostle Peter was informed by our Lord the will of God respecting himself, he asks with respect to John, "*Lord, and what shall this man do?*" The answer which our Saviour gave is highly instructive: "*If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.*" The Saviour checks and recalls him to present duty; He makes the veil of futurity thicker and more obscure — at the same time awakens his regard to the plain will of God. Some of you, perhaps, may be in affliction — the hand of God is heavy upon you, and you wish to know how to remove it; you inquire anxiously into that secret — when the hand shall be removed, whether it will be on this side the grave, or when you are dismissed; but this is a secret impenetrable, and sacred in the Divine keeping. You know, however, by what means to transmute the affliction to advantage, to consider it as "*the trial of your faith*," which is "*more precious than gold when it is tried*," and as that which will produce, if you are patient, crowns and sceptres hereafter. Acknowledge the sovereignty of God. Imitate the silent submission of Job: "*Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.*" Here is plain

duty; and remember that He can cause present "*light afflictions, which are but for a moment,*" to "*work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*"

You are at the head of a family, you have children, and you have great anxiety about them; you feel for their happiness, and are anxious to know the will of God respecting them; you expect much from the talents of one, imagining that he will rise in the world to honour or affluence, and you augur evil from the weakness or insignificance of the other. But when you are laid in the dust, one child shall rise, perhaps, into eminence, and another sink into indigence, and you know it not; or, your property, acquired by industry, may be prodigally squandered — and what then? These are "*The secret things which belong to God.*" You know how to form them to habits of industry; you know how to teach them to feel another's wo; you know how to cherish in them the seeds of piety, to instruct them in this gospel, where they may learn that they are saved by the death and bought by the blood of Christ. This is a field large enough for your exertions, and this "*belongs to you and to your children.*" Some of you may be anxious to increase your property for the sake of your children, but you fear that this consequence or the other will not ensue, success may not accompany your exertions; but if it were afforded, it might make them indolent or make them proud, or not produce all the good effects you imagine— this is secret, and belongs to God: but to do good with your property, to "*rejoice with those that rejoice,*" and to "*mourn with those that mourn*"—this belongs to you and to your children. If you have influence, let your example benefit others; "*be instant in season and out of season.*" Use the talents intrusted to you; recollect by whom they are intrusted; and that Jesus Christ says, "*Occupy till I come*"—that is, by a right use of your talents. These are the things which are revealed, and they belong to you and to your children.

Again: another person, perhaps, is a patriot. He is solicitous for the happiness of his country; he feels great apprehensions of its ruin from the immorality and vices of the age; he sees the beginning of sorrows—evils which the sins of this nation are likely to produce, and is inquiring as to their end. The Prophet Daniel was infected by this kind of anxiety, inquiring, "*What shall be the end of these things?*" and the answer he received belongs to us: "*Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end; but this thou mayest know, thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.*"

On the whole, let us, my brethren, do all the good we can, and be continually looking forward to the manifestation of "*a new heaven and a new earth,*" for true Christians, "*wherein dwelleth righteousness.*" The kingdom of Christ must stand, however it may be opposed. Though we shall soon pass away, and are about to migrate into another country, *that* will continue and re-

main forever. Let us all seriously attend to these things that are revealed; not indulging ourselves in a fondness for obscurities, and for exploring the mysteries of nature or of religion, to the neglect of the great things of the soul. Do not indulge curiosity by considering what is the nature of the soul, while you forget its salvation; nor in useless speculations about the origin of evil, while you disregard the remedy for it; nor in inquiries into physical causes, to the neglect of the Great Physician. Let us not accustom ourselves to consider death as a phenomenon merely, but as a moral effect, "*for the wages of sin is death;*" on the contrary, by acquainting ourselves with God and with Jesus Christ, let us prepare for the time of our death, when all the effects of sin will be removed, and when, if we are so happy as to be united to Christ, "*this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality,*" and "*death shall be swallowed up in victory;*" for these are the things which are "*revealed,*" and they "*belong to us, and to our children.*"

XIX.

MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S WORK.*

PSALM XC., 16: *Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, January 8, 1829, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

THIS Psalm, which is entitled "a prayer of Moses," is supposed to have been written on the occasion of a great destruction of the Israelites by pestilence, inflicted on their rebellious guilt by the Divine wrath. It may be regarded as the funeral oration of a perishing people. It appeared as if the Providence of God had adopted a retrograde course in the extinction of that Church which He had raised: such a fear is expressed in the petition, "Return, O Lord! let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants!" . . . . Instead of this, as the Psalmist in the text proceeds, "Let Thy work appear to Thy servants; Thy glory to their children." From these words we may consider,

I. The "work" of God, as mentioned here. This work denotes, primarily, the establishment of Israel in the promised land of Canaan; ultimately, the preparation of the way for the Messiah and his Church.

In sacred language, things eminent and conspicuous are peculiarly ascribed to God: thus we read of a great river, as "a river of God;" great trees, as "trees of God." And thus this work, as it originates

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

in the Divine power, not in an arm of man, is distinguished as the work of God. As the Spirit is given, it flourishes; as the Spirit is withheld, it decays. Besides which, this, of all his works, is the most replete with the display of his character, most brightly stamped with the Divine image. The Church, both the Jewish and the Christian (and both are one in design), is the grand instrument of Providence in reviving and sustaining the true knowledge of God among mankind.

II. When this "work" may be said to "appear." It may be described as appearing anew in different periods; as a work delayed at times, yet "revived in the midst of the years." Often, after seeming to have let alone his work, has the Divine Being awoke, laid bare his arm, and set his hand a second time to his unfinished work. The degree of piety prevailing at any time is the gauge by which we may measure the progress of this work in the prosperity of Israel. If the prophets were revered, the idols abolished, the Sabbaths hallowed, iniquities forsaken—their peace flowed as a river, their prosperity as the waves of the sea: but if they were disobedient, their judges regardless of justice, the word and worship of God despised—their land was desolate, themselves a prey to famine or the sword, or led captive by their foes.

Under the Christian dispensation, the Church of God has experienced similar fluctuations. At some periods it has appeared as if truth and piety had almost vanished from the earth; as in those dark ages when the pure light of the gospel was buried under a dense cloud of papal corruptions. Yet God has caused his work to reappear in various ways; as when, at the era of the Protestant Reformation, He put forth his hand a second time to restore his word and worship in its purity and power. If truth displaces error; if cordial piety succeeds to a merely nominal religion; if converts flock to the Church, as doves to their windows—then God lets his work appear to his servants, his glory to their children. The views and desires of good men are large and comprehensive in reference to the prosperity of the Church: they look forward in hope to future generations, as destined to be more and more distinguished in piety. Such were the desires of Moses: if we, my brethren, are strangers to these desires, we are not true servants of the Lord.

III. Why it is so desirable that the prayer of Moses in the text should be accomplished, that "God's work should appear to his servants, his glory to their children."

Next to our own salvation, this will be the chief desire of every sincerely pious mind. The first concern of a Christian is, that his own life may be given to him as a prey; that He who has begun may perform the good work of his grace in his own soul: the second is, that the same good work may extend to others; that they also may be sharers with ourselves of the same salvation. . . . . Here we may observe a difference between the pursuit of earthly, and that of heavenly riches. In the former case, what others gain is lost to ourselves; hence, among the competitors for worldly wealth, a standard

of discord is raised. But here, the more deeply we ourselves drink, the more earnestly we desire that others should drink also, of these free waters of eternal life. We feel no disposition to stint, no jealousy of others as our rivals: "Oh that men may know what God hath done for their salvation! may enjoy the same pure element of peace!" this is our only desire.

1. This desire is the dictate of piety, of a regard to the glory of God. In the work of his grace, as accomplished in the prosperity of his Church, all his perfections appear in a beautiful harmony. Here all that is awful in his justice is seen, as a wall of fire that surrounds the Deity; while all that is lovely appeals to our affections and animates our hopes. Angels desire to look into the wonders of redemption, and study the manifold wisdom of God displayed in the Church; not as the Church is a teacher, but as it is an illustration of that wisdom. Where are they that revere God and work righteousness to be found, but among those who are the subjects of this work, the members of this Church? No sooner does any one become one of these, than he goes forth to do the will of God.

2. The sentiment of the text is equally the dictate of benevolence —of a regard for the happiness of others. Until men come to know and love God, they never can be happy: they are withered, dead, as branches cut off from the root, from the source of all vitality, severed from the Divine Being, in whose favour is life! "I am the vine," says Jesus Christ, "ye are the branches; and, severed from Me, ye can bear no fruit, but are cast away as branches withered, and fit only for the burning." We must be here prepared for heaven, as a place prepared for those only who are sanctified, those who are wrought and polished by Divine grace into ornaments of the eternal temple. Whether we desire the happiness of men here or hereafter, we must desire the success of this pre-eminent work of God, which involves our only preparation for the realms of eternal victory and glory.

Let this, then, be the object of our fervent prayers, that God would cause his work to appear, and to redound to his glory, in the view of his servants and their children; that He would enthrone his word in the hearts of his people, as the law of their lives and actions. How many, with the gospel resounding in their ears, live as the Gentiles that know not God! If we have any regard for the glory of God, or the good of man, in the present or the eternal world, here, in the success of the gospel, is the nexus, the nucleus, of all benevolence and piety combined. It is impossible to say whether a person is more the friend of his Maker or his brethren, who prays for the advancement of this Divine work in the world. This alone can subdue the pride of man, and lay all flesh prostrate before God. This alone can transform the moral desert into the garden of the Lord. Thorns and briers must overspread the land, until the Spirit be poured out from above; then "the wilderness shall become a fruitful field: for not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

XX.

THE DIVINE COMPLACENCY IN PUBLIC WORSHIP.*

PSALM lxxxvii., 2: *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, July 11, 1830.]

THE dispensations of revealed religion have been very different in different ages of the world, each adapted to the particular circumstances of the Church at the time it was instituted. The patriarchal dispensation was different from that introduced by Moses; this continued among the tribes for many generations, and has been superseded by Christianity, which is much more simple in its construction, much more sublime in its doctrines, and promises, and precepts. But yet, notwithstanding this diversity in the mode of communication of Divine truth, there is an identity on the great subjects of religion which may be discerned by every serious mind. The devotion of the patriarchs was of the same character and description in its essential properties with the devotion of the saints under the Mosaic economy; and the heart of a pious Jew would correspond with the heart of a pious Christian of the present day. Notwithstanding the continual allusions to the institutions of Moses, and the peculiarities of that economy, the language of the Old Testament is the fit and proper vehicle for our devotion: nor are there any parts of the word of God more precious than those in which the Psalmist expressed his feelings. This book of the Psalms will ever retain its authority in the Church of God, by its presenting such a number of forms of devotion as are adapted to the purposes of prayer and praise for the faithful in every age.

By Zion we are to understand the Church of God as then constituted. It took its name from that hill on which the tabernacle was placed, and the neighbourhood of that hill on which the temple was afterward erected. Zion appears to have been the name of the glorious residence of the Deity, who was pleased to manifest himself by a visible appearance, by the Shekinah which went over the mercy-seat, whence he communicated answers when the high-priest or the King of Israel sought and inquired at the mouth of God. When it is said, "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," the meaning is, that the Divine Being takes a peculiar complacency in the worship and service of his people; that although He loves his people, and always looks with regard on their dwellings, yet when they are assembled at Zion—when the tribes go up to give thanks to the name of the Lord—in the character of an assembled Church and people they are peculiarly dear to Him, and He looks down upon them with peculiar satisfaction and delight.

* Reported in the Pulpit.

Dropping the Jewish cast of the phraseology here, it amounts to a similar proposition with regard to the Church of God at present: that He never looks upon the saints with so much complacency as when engaged in the solemnities of public and social worship.

First, it is here assumed that the Lord loves the dwellings of Jacob—he loves those that are true Israelites. These are succeeded by the name *Christian*, for the Christian Church is now become the true Israel of God. He loves his saints on account of the image of himself which they bear; He loves them on account of those graces which are infused into them when they are renewed by the Spirit; He loves them on account of the relation they stand in to Him as his people, and as his Church, who are qualified for the duties of the relation by that love of their Father, that reliance upon his care, that delight in his person, that enjoyment in his service which belongs to dutiful and affectionate children.

He loves them because they imitate his perfections in some humble measure—because they receive the word of his mouth—because they are ready to obey every call of his Providence, setting themselves in the paths of his testimony wherever He may direct—because they yield themselves to God as those that are alive from the dead, and their bodies as instruments of righteousness, no longer walking after the deeds of the flesh, but after the will of God. He takes a delight in them; the Lord delighteth in the righteous; He knoweth their way; He loves, approves, and confirms it. The most common occupations of life—the honest industry of the servants of God is looked upon by Him with approbation. By these they show forth their Father, and the praises of Him who called them from darkness to light. The most ordinary duties of our calling become sacrifices to God, and religious duties, when performed in the Spirit, and directed to the great end of glorifying God. He looks with peculiar complacency on them on account of those domestic devotional acknowledgments of his majesty which are there maintained: when the head walks before his family, the priest to offer praise and thanksgiving, this attracts peculiar approbation and delight. He loves to see his people training up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and walking after them in the paths of that obedience which He has enjoined. He delights to see the course of purity which runs in Christian families. He loves to see the progress which the younger parts of religious families make in piety, while they grow up in grace, and in favour with God and man. He looks down with peculiar delight on such circles as these: there He deigns his presence, and bestows peculiar blessings. However obscure the dwellings of Jacob may be, to Him they are open and manifest at all times; and whether in cottages or in palaces, his eye rests there with complacency, and He says of such places, "Here will I dwell forever and ever." Prayer and devotion sanctify every family, and diffuse a spirit of piety through all the avocations of life, so that we need not retire from the world, but are rather called to show forth the virtues of the Christian life in it.

But it is said that, although He loves the dwellings of Jacob, yet

He loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob; that nothing in the dwellings of Jacob so much attracts his attention as the people of God connected together in a social capacity. For the Church signifies nothing but the gathering together of individual saints; and wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord, they are, for that place and time, a Church: and when they are in the habit of uniting together by voluntary and social ties, they become a permanent Church of the living and true God; for the Church differs from an individual only by the circumstance of number. Let us see, then, on what account it is that the Lord feels a greater complacency towards his saints when thus viewed in connexion together than in an individual character.

In the first place, the Divine Being regards with peculiar complacency the worship of his saints on its own account. Worship cannot be the business of life, nor be made to occupy the principal part of our time, nor the greatest number of our thoughts. The distractions of business, the necessities arising from our corporeal structure, are such as to force on the most devout mind a very strenuous application to things that have an opposite tendency to religion. It is peculiar to heaven to be that place where God's people will serve Him day and night, and where God will be all in all. But in proportion as we attain to some resemblance of that employment, in that proportion may we be supposed to be acceptable to God; nor can we be supposed to be so much so in his sight as when we partake of this devotion. The common business of life is sanctified by piety; but devotion is the very element of piety; it is the principal end for which we were created; it partakes of our final destination, and it will be the perpetual employment of eternity. When the saints assemble together for devotion, they call into action all the graces of the Spirit; faith rests upon his promises—love grows in the contemplation of perfection—gratitude is felt warm and vivid in the heart—adherence to Divine truth is experienced so as to produce a resolution to buy the truth, and sell it not—reverence for the service of God and for his majesty, deference to his authority, a desire of being acquainted with his will, and entire resignation of ourselves to his discipline, are the sentiments expressed in praise and prayer. These actuate the breasts of Christians, and they produce a great mass of devotional feeling experienced nowhere else. They cannot but be acceptable to God in their insulated state; but when combined together—when, as now, there are thousands engaged in the same worship, and actuated by the same graces of the Spirit of God, called into exercise on these occasions—who can fail to perceive how acceptable such a spectacle must be to the great object of worship!

As the worship of God consists in yielding to Him that which is his prerogative, in giving Him that which is his due; so, in proportion as this is exhibited upon a wide and extended scale, in that proportion must it be a most acceptable offering to God.

In the next place, the Divine Being regards with complacency the gates of Zion, on account of that union of mind and consent of heart

evinced in the assembling of God's people together, and constituting themselves into a church. The very essence of the Christian Church derives itself from the existence previously of a love of the brotherhood. Without this there could be no voluntary association as a Church of God. Were not Christians attracted towards each other by their bearing one image, tending to one way, and being called to the same calling, they would never coalesce together. Christian churches are, therefore, the very product of Divine love, and their union will bear proportion to that of their love—it being evinced, be it observed, by love more than by any other evidence whatever. "I pray not for these alone," said our Saviour, "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

Here, you see, the union of the people of God is compared to the union between Christ and his Father, and is stated to be of such importance, that it should be the grand evidence of the Christian religion; that Christians who are thus united should hold such a conspicuous situation with respect to this quality, and present such a contrast to the selfish dealings of the world, as to be a demonstration that God has sent his Son, and that He loves his saints even as He loveth Him.

And as this is the origin of Christian churches, it is the very element upon which they subsist. Just in proportion as they love each other will all the fruits of the union be reaped. If brotherly love be in vigorous and strong exercise, then they help each other's infirmities—the strong assist the weak—the wise instruct the ignorant—the poor are administered to by the rich. Blended and united in one common cause, and separated from all selfish considerations, they mind each one, not his own things, but the things which are of Christ Jesus. They rejoice with them that rejoice—they weep with them that weep—they bestow their sympathies and affections on each other, and appear to be, indeed, the Church of the Most High God. And what is it that maintains this but the assembling together in worship? There they unite their hearts together—there they experience the transforming power of grace—and there they feel that grace melting them into one image. Separate them into different parts, and let them not meet together, and their love will vanish into a mere name. It is the co-operation of saints in public worship, and the habit of uniting together, that maintains this Divine and almighty principle of the Christian life.

In the third place, God looks with peculiar complacency on the dwellings of Zion, because of the testimony which the Church bears towards his truth. The gracious design of God was, that his truth should not be confined to one class, or to one place, or to one age;

but that the light of day should diffuse itself over all the earth. For this purpose He formed his people into a church, that they might be a city set on a hill, a light that cannot be hid, and that they might stand as a conspicuous body in every part of the world. The profession of Christians would utter too feeble a voice separately; thus dispersed, it would emit a very slight effulgence, and be equivalent to mere darkness. But when the saints of God unite together in one place, and at one time, for the purpose of public worship, and this takes place in every part of Christendom, they become the objects of attention—they cannot be hid; an inquiry is instituted for what purpose they meet together—what profession they make—what is the hope of their calling; and they are ready to give an answer to every one that asketh with the meekness of spiritual wisdom.

The Church of God is the great teacher of the world. The voice of the minister is the voice of the Church, since he is the organic part of it. The voice of the minister is the voice of the Church, for whatever is taught there is taught by the Church of God, and is maintained by the evangelists, and pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

God cannot but look with peculiar complacency on an institution that has such an effect in carrying to mankind the truths of his religion. How is it these truths are learned? how is it men become acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity, but by stepping into the assemblies of the saints; and there, compunction and conviction attending the truth, they are led to see they are sinners, and to confess that God is with his Church of a truth? Let this mighty influence in maintaining the truths of Christianity be removed, and darkness will encompass the earth, and gross darkness the people. And this is in close connexion with the ends and purposes of associated worship. Hence the Church is styled "the pillar and ground of the truth:" it is the grand means of maintaining and propagating the public profession of Christianity.

Once more I would observe, that the Divine Being looks with complacency on the gates of Zion, upon account of that deference to his authority which is evinced by maintaining and keeping up the practice of those institutes which rest entirely on that authority. The Church of God is guided in matters of positive institute by the command of God; and He has ordained ordinances of a spiritual nature, which rest only and entirely on his command; and He maintains them in their primitive condition from age to age. The observance of Baptism, of the Lord's Supper, and of one day out of seven for the worship of God, and their convening at one place and at one time, are continued by the Church of God, out of a profound deference to the authority of the great Lawgiver. And when they are preserved in their purity, He cannot but look with complacency on this deference. There is more respect paid to the Divine Being in maintaining positive institutes, than in maintaining moral duties: for moral duties have their uses independent of pleasing God; they grow out

of the relation we stand in to each other; they recommend themselves to our reason, apart from revelation and religion: but positive institutes, as they rest on Divine authority, and would not be obligatory but on that account, show more strongly the deference of the people of God to his revealed will. We give ourselves entirely to the prescription of God's authority when we do it only because we are commanded to do so. The Divine Being cannot but look with peculiar complacency on this unreserved surrender to his commands—on our willingness to go in any paths in which He has been pleased to direct our steps.

Let us consider, in the next place, how it is the Divine Being manifests this complacency in the gates of Zion, above the dwellings of Jacob. If He loves the gates of Zion more than He loves the dwellings of Jacob, He will make this love manifest by impressive and decisive indications of it: He will make it appear in the effects of his gracious communications. The principles of the Divine nature are active principles; and his complacency can never be separated from the benefits that result from his approbation.

The Divine Being shows his regard to the gates of Zion by making the assembly of the saints the grand means of conversion. It is there the Divine Being bestows that grace which renews the heart: *though I doubt not that if religious education were more diligently attended to, it would be more generally the means of conversion among the younger branches of society.* But the greater number of persons refer the commencement of that change of heart and life to what they heard in the house of God. It is the word of God, in connexion with the worship of the saints, that is usually made effective to that purpose: they that are brought to the New Jerusalem may be generally said to be born in Zion. Thousands can recollect the sacred season of Divine visitation; and their memories will never banish the time, and place, and circumstance connected with this great change. They recollect that discourse, and that moment, when they began to feel a compunction for sin—when they were first led to cry out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"—when the agitation of a troubled conscience first made itself manifest, and they received a wound, which nothing can heal but the atoning blood of the crucified Mediator. To communicate such influences as these—to make the word effectual, and to bring it to the heart of a particular individual, so as to make him feel as David did when he composed this Psalm, is an effect that can only be brought about by the Divine power. "The Spirit bloweth where it listeth" in this respect; but as a mighty rushing wind makes itself manifest, notwithstanding its invisible nature, so the influences of God are often communicated by decisive and undeniable effects.

In the next place, that peculiar presence of God is generally vouchsafed to his saints, and made manifest to them, although it be hidden from the world, which induces the conviction that God is present of a truth. Wherever they recorded his name, He promised the tribes there He would be with them, and bless them. We doubt not that

David knew this, or we should not see that ardent desire of God which he so often experienced. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" And with what awful rigour did he curse those who would separate him from the God of Israel, saying to him by their actions, go and worship other gods!

Our Lord has incorporated this promise on his own religion: He says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—(Matt., xviii., 20.) The saints of God still meet with the expectation that they may find this precious promise verified; and before they retire they are made to confess that Jesus Christ did indeed deign his presence: they are ready to say, "How awful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." They feel that nearness of approach to Him—that confidence in his mercy—that holy triumph in the relation they stand in to Him, which it was promised they should experience. They look around with delight on the thousands engaged in the same service as themselves; and they feel that this is the very element of true devotion. How amiable are thy tabernacles, they are ready to say, O Lord of hosts! when shall we come and appear before God? That immediate and special protection of God which is vouchsafed in public, in private is necessarily interrupted in its operation by secular affairs and employments. It is the very business of the saints not only to see each other's face, but to behold, by faith, the face of the great Eternal—to rejoice in his love—to present themselves before Him as his people—to worship at his footstool—and to receive the emanations of his love into their hearts.

Again, the Divine Being shows his peference of the gates of Zion to the dwellings of Jacob, by continually maintaining in operation those gifts which are for the edification of the saints, and without which the union of the saints would be with difficulty maintained. The ministry of the gospel has an essential connexion with the permanence of the gospel; and though we cannot suppose that the principal end of assembling for worship is to hear an earthly voice, yet, if this were taken out of the way, it must be confessed that the fruits of such meetings would be wofully diminished. The Divine Being is pleased to raise up such gifts in his ministers as are suited to the edifying of the body of Christ: and when they are removed, Divine Providence, by the vivification of his Spirit, raises up other instruments, and is never at a loss to raise up fit persons for spreading abroad his word. His promise is, that the word which He has put into the mouth of his Church shall never depart out of it, nor out of the mouth of her seed, nor out of the mouth of her seed's seed forever and ever. Agreeably to this, you find that the word of God has never been out of the mouth of his Church: God has given first apostles, and then prophets, then evangelists, and then pastors and teachers; and thus He has multiplied his gifts for the perfecting of the saints—for the work of the ministry—for the edifying of the body of Christ. Ministers may die;

they are portions of that flesh which is as grass; but the word of the Lord endureth forever. That word which is preached to you still lives forever; it is essential to the constitution—to the permanence of his Church. There can be no reason given why this succession of faithful men, endowed with the Spirit of God, may not always be expected: the great Head of the Church still lives, and out of the all-creating influences of his Spirit dispenses that portion into earthly vessels which is essential for this purpose.

Lastly, let me observe that the Divine Being shows his preference to Zion by that marvellous protection which is afforded to the interests of the Church of God; whereby, though weak, and frequently reduced to a handful of disciples, yet they have been protected, and their society on earth continued. There were only one hundred and twenty who scattered the seeds of the gospel at the first; the Church seems primarily to have been constituted of that number who assembled together in an obscure dwelling in Jerusalem. But the number increased and multiplied, and Jesus Christ founded his Church upon a rock, against which even the gates of hell shall not prevail. Many a time may Israel say to this day, had not the Lord been on their side, their enemies would have overcome them. But the Lord was on their side—He turned their captivity—He delivered them from their persecutors—He caused the wrath of men to praise Him, and restrained the remainder of their wrath. He sometimes diverted the attention of their enemies by secular distractions: thus the earth helped the woman when the dragon cast the flood out of his mouth; the Divine Being so interfered as to create a second interest favourable to his Church, and made monarchs, for their own advantage, protect that Church which they would otherwise persecute and oppress. All hearts are in his hands; He can say to the proudest waves of human wrath, hither shall ye go, and no farther. He makes the worm Jacob to thresh the mountains. He allows his Church to be the only society which subsists from age to age without any alteration: it exhibits the same form—is maintained by the same principles—and speaks the same voice that issued from the infantile Church at the first period of her history.

By way of improvement, let each one consider whether they have such a feeling as that which is here, in condescension to human capacity, ascribed to them. Have you that love to the gates of Zion which corresponds to the statement of this passage? If you have, you have the mind of God. If you love the gates of Zion, you sympathize with the Divine mind with regard to a most important office; you view his character and interest in a similar light to his own; you walk in the paths of his commands, and are conformed to the monitions and dictates of the Eternal Mind, who looks off from kings, and councils, and battles, and the splendid achievements of mankind, and fixes his attention upon the place where two or three are gathered together in his name.

There is something more solemn and august in the assembling of saints together than in any other association on earth. The Lord

looks down from his sanctuary, and beholds them; the very groanings of his prisoners enter into the ear of the Lord. How do you stand affected to the public worship of God? Is the day of the Lord a tiresome and a tedious day? Are you ready to say, When shall it be over? when shall we return to the busy scenes of our worldly calling and commerce? Are the discourses delivered, the services performed before you, welcome? Are you fain to go away, and reluctant to come to the house of God? If so, you have no union yet with the Divine Mind—no sympathy with the Eternal Spirit; and till some change takes place, it is impossible that heaven shall be yours. The very employment of heaven would be to you a source of disquiet. There must be a love of the worship of God, and a love of the Author of that worship—there must be a worshipping frame of mind infused into the heart of every individual, before he can see God face to face. All the earth shall see the glory of God; for what purpose, then, does He manifest that glory but that He may be adored, and that all may fall down before him, and worship him and the Lamb forever and ever? He reveals it for the purpose of drawing forth the prayers, and the praises, and the thanksgivings of his people, according to their circumstances, and with a view to be the object of their worship. If you do not love the worship of God, no manifestation of God to you will be tolerable: He will manifest himself to you, either in vengeance to vindicate his cause; or He will manifest himself to you as the object of worship, and the object of supreme delight, and as that Being from whom all your happiness is to be derived. Oh, recollect the time is coming when you are lost if God is not all in all to you. God is all in all in heaven; and there his saints who follow him here faithfully, but feebly, worship him day and night; there they see him face to face, and worship him forever and forever.

There are many, I doubt not, that can put their own attestation to the truth of this sentiment, and who can say that they love the gates of Zion more than the dwellings of Jacob. Their most privileged moments are the moments of public worship: the fellowship of the saints is the most select and precious of their moments in their esteem. Such are training in the Church, to be transferred and transplanted to the worship of heaven: their faith will be turned into vision; that which they hoped for they will receive face to face. That which they are pursuing is not a shadow; there *is* an eternal heaven—there *is* an ever-living God—there *is* an innumerable company of spirits made perfect—there *is* a scene of elevated worship in Zion which shall be of eternal duration. These are without the reach of human ken, but they are confirmed by the promise of Him that cannot lie; and these are the true sayings of God: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

Let us do all in our power to promote the honour of God—to enlarge the means of instruction—to extend the influence of the Christian ministry—and to form new societies, as so many habitations of God through the Spirit. If we have tasted the advantages of social worship, let us be desirous of communicating these advantages to our fel-

low-creatures; and look with compassion on those inhabitants of this highly-favoured city who are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, as if they were dwelling in pagan countries. Let us make haste to remove this reproach; let us each use his efforts to put an end to it, and to diffuse the knowledge of Jesus Christ farther and farther.

XXI

PRAYER FOR THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH ENCOURAGED.*

PSALM CXXII., 6: *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, June 10, 1830, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

THE Psalm which contains these words is ascribed to David: it breathes the spirit of piety and patriotism by which he was distinguished. Many things concurred to render Jerusalem a place of peculiar interest to the Israelites: as the metropolis of the Holy Land, it concentred their affections; no people were ever more remarkable for attachment to their king, their laws, and their God. It reminds us of the Church of God, as it was the scene of the temple and its ordinances. "Thither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to give thanks to the name of the Lord." We may consider that, in the text, a blessing is promised to every one that loves the Church of God, every one that desires to promote the interest of religion.

We have here an object for prayer proposed, an exhortation to pray for this object, and a promise to those who comply with the exhortation.

I. "The peace of Jerusalem" is proposed as an object for prayer. "Peace" is here used to denote prosperity, all that is good. The Psalmist thus explains it in the succeeding verse: "Peace be within thy walls, prosperity within thy palaces." The word, taken in this large acceptation, was customary among the Israelites; they wished "peace" to each other, in the sense of "all good things." The prosperity of the Church consists, not in one thing, but many; and,

1. The piety of its members. Their numbers, without this, are as nothing. A church without piety is a synagogue of Satan, a sect and school of pestilence. The measure of piety in a church is the measure of prosperity. Without this, however rich, it is poor; however outwardly flourishing, inwardly wretched. Where the love of God, the faith of Jesus Christ, the fruits

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

of the Spirit abound, there the Church is in a state of prosperity, however afflicted in outward circumstances. As members of the Church, we profess to make ourselves over to the Father, Son, and Spirit; if we keep back our hearts from God, if we transfer our affections to the world, we are not true members of the Church; our profession is false and hollow.

2. A spirit of inquiry, promoting conversion, is a second sign of prosperity in a church. If the word of God is not a savour of life, it is not of a neutral character, it becomes a savour of death; this is the condition of a church in decay and death. In the opposite state, where penitents are inquiring, where converts are added to the Church and to the Lord, there Christianity triumphs, there the Church has "peace within her walls, prosperity within her palaces."

3. A third feature of church prosperity is the prevalence of brotherly love; the spirit of union among the members; the disposition to bear one another's burdens, relieve one another's wants and sorrows. "By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." There is always room in the Church for a perpetual increase in love. This is the mind of Christ, and He prescribes it as his own new commandment, as the distinguishing characteristic of his true disciples. How lovely a spectacle does that church present in which brotherly love prevails! no jarring passions, no envious competitions; but a delightful retirement from the troubles of the world. It is when Christians preserve "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," that the prosperity of the Church of Christ peculiarly appears.*

4. Conscientious and diligent attendance on all the ordinances of religion, public and domestic, is a fourth requisite to the prosperity of a Christian society. Neglect of these is contagious among the members, and fatal to the well-being of a church. All should conspire to strengthen the hands of their ministers and their brethren, by an attentive observance of the appointed means of grace.

5. To this must be added, as a fifth point, the due exercise of church discipline.† The precious must be discriminated from

* "Might we indulge a hope that not only our own denomination, but every other description of Christians, would act upon these principles of mutual forbearance and charity, we should hail the dawn of a brighter day than the annals of time have yet recorded; we should behold in the Church a peaceful haven, inviting us to retire from the tossings and perils of this unquiet ocean, to a sacred enclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms of the world were not permitted to invade."—R. Hall, *On Terms of Communion.*

† The following passage, from the "Treatise on Terms of Communion," will be read with solemn admiration: "I am far from thinking lightly of the spiritual power with which Christ has armed his Church. It is a high and mysterious power, which has no parallel on earth. The sentence of excommunication, in particular, harmonizing with the dictates of conscience, and re-echoed by her voice, is truly terrible; it is the voice of God, speaking through its legitimate organ, which he who despises ranks with heathen men, joins the synagogue of Satan, and takes his lot with an unbelieving world, doomed to perdition. Excommunication is a sword which, strong in its apparent weakness, and the sharper and more efficacious for being divested of all sensible and exterior envelopements, lights immediately on the spirit, and inflicts a wound which no balm can cure, no ointment can mollify, but which must continue to ulcerate and burn, until it be healed by the blood of atonement, applied by penitence and prayer."

the vile, the wheat from the tares. Spiritual censures should be administered, as cases may require; otherwise disorders must arise and spread. It is recorded, to the commendation of one of the seven churches of Asia, "thou canst not bear them that are evil." Openly immoral professors must be excommunicated, regarded as heathen, given up to Satan, according to the injunction of St. Paul. Without discipline in a church, Christianity has no safeguard from all manner of abuse and reproach. And here there should be no respect of persons; we must "know no man after the flesh."

II. The exhortation is, that we should "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." This we must do, because the influence of the Holy Spirit, a direct action of God upon the soul, is necessary to realize the prosperity of the Church; it must be obtained, therefore, by prayer. So the Psalmist prayed, "Let Thy work appear to Thy servants, Thy glory to their children!" God only can command a decisive blessing; exert a mighty energy; shine into the heart; plant the seed of all spiritual renovation. Where the Church is to prosper, men must be born of God: a birth to which none can contribute without his aid; in the production of which, the gospel is his own appointed instrument. We must look to God alone for the success of his word, and remove far from us all that is offensive to his holy mind. There should be stated seasons of prayer for the Divine blessing on the Church; its prosperity will thus be secured, because it is his own concern; it is the sphere in which his glory is displayed; while it provides the only means of saving men. We should pray that He may set his hand a second time to his work, as it concerns the success of his Church.

III. The promise connected with the exhortation in the text ensures their own prosperity to those who seek that of the Church. "They shall prosper that love thee."

It is a serious injury to be united to a dead, a merely formal church; a great advantage, to hold communion with one that is spiritually alive. "As iron sharpens iron, so does the countenance of a man his friend." The saints admonish and animate each other by their example, and thus a higher standard of religious character is maintained. We are easily reconciled to what is established and familiar; this should be purely good in a Christian society. Besides which, our love to that Church, which is so dear to God, cannot but attract his smile and obtain his favour. The Lord loves Zion, desires her prosperity, and says concerning her, "This is the place of My rest; here will I dwell, for here is My delight." Disdaining all the grandeur of the world, He fixes his love on his Church, as "the place where his honour dwells." Jesus Christ so loved the Church that He gave himself for it; and therefore He looks with complacency on those who sympathize with his affection, who concur with his desire, who act upon his plan, in unison with his purpose. This is the

character of all good men; they are zealous for the Church of God, and, according to his promise, they must prosper, at least, in the great and only important view of prosperity, in their own souls. Would you enjoy this spiritual prosperity? Seek the good of the Church. Would you be blessed in your personal experience? Be yourselves a medium of blessing to others. Let your inquiry be, "How can I promote the glory of God in the church to which I belong? Whom can I reclaim? Whom can I benefit and comfort?" And, be assured, your happy experience will attest that it is the Life of truth who proclaimed, "They shall prosper that love Jerusalem;" peace shall be on them that pray for peace on the Israel of God.

XXII.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO THE MEN OF THE WORLD.*

COL., iv., 5: *Walk in wisdom towards them that are without.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, April 19, 1829.]

THE former part of this epistle contains many striking remarks on the great leading truths of religion; the latter abounds in general observations on the conduct which Christians should manifest towards each other. In the passage before us we have a precept of a different kind—a precept to regulate our conduct towards the ungodly. In the times the apostles wrote, the line which separated the Church from the world was very distinct; those who did not openly avow attachment to Christ, were to be considered as enemies. These two classes comprehend all mankind, of every rank and degree. Such remarks will, in fact, apply to present times, with a slight qualification. There has another class of character sprung up—persons who do not make an *open* profession of religion, but manifest a general interest in its concerns, and would be shocked to be reckoned among its foes. This precept, therefore, does not suggest any particular line of conduct to be pursued towards *them*, but towards those who are confessedly *strangers to the commonwealth of Israel*, who, whatever may be the amiable qualities they possess, make no pretensions to religion, and are truly of the world.

Now, in reference to these persons, who are in the text described as being *without*, we are to *walk in wisdom;* that is, we are to conduct ourselves in such a way as will prevent these persons from drawing any argument from our deportment unfavourable to Christianity, or which may serve as an excuse for their own hostility to it. And here I may remind you that this

* Reported in the Evangelist.

wisdom "*cometh from above; it is first pure, easy to be entreated, without hypocrisy, and full of good fruits.*" The gospel is not only intended to benefit the Christian personally, but to exert an influence over a large sphere, by the manifestation of its power upon the heart and life.

We are to understand by the phrase *to walk*, a constant tenour or course of action. It is intended to express a habit of life, a constant deportment which is pleasing to God, and calculated to promote the great ends of religion. To those who are without, the disciple of Christ sustains a moral relation. The rules of virtue, which all laws recognise, are to be maintained by virtue of their relation to the order and peace of society, irrespective of the obligations of religion. As the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, we do not judge those who obey all laws but these; for "*them who are without, God will judge.*" While we have no right to compel men to come into the Church, we have very important duties to discharge towards them.

There is a divine armour provided for the Christian, and there are weapons both of attack and defence. Our duty to the men of the world, and our use of our spiritual armour, will depend very much on the position in which we are placed respecting them. As we ought to take care of ourselves, so we ought to act towards them in that way most likely to produce a favourable impression on their minds. If inconsistent conduct does great mischief, a conduct which "*becometh the gospel of Christ*" will be productive of great good.

1. Our conduct should be regulated so as not to be injurious to our own interests.

As we cannot go out of the world, nor was it intended by the Divine Founder of Christianity that his disciples should entirely seclude themselves from its affairs, and we shall necessarily come into frequent and close contact with ungodly men, the precept before us ought to make us careful lest that intercourse injure our piety. If we walk according to its direction, we shall guard against a sinful conformity to the maxims and practices of the world.

We must not, under a mistaken notion of doing good, have any fellowship with the works of darkness. We are not, under the idea of making religion more palatable to those who dislike it, to countenance sinful indulgences, or forsake the paths of piety. There is such a levity in the fashionable modes of spending time, that every Christian must feel they are opposed to religion. If, with a view of *recommending* religion to the multitude, we engage in the frivolities and habits to which they addict themselves, we shall seriously impair our fitness to hold communion with God. These pursuits *must* be renounced by us. I am aware that many contend Christianity should relax a little in these things, that its professors should "*become all things to all men.*" But this is a mistaken view of the apostle's conduct, and

the reason which he assigns for it. He is referring to matters about which Christians themselves were divided, and which were not essential to real religion; and for some of these things *the Jews* could plead Divine authority, and were therefore reluctant to resign them. It was not in reference to Christian deportment towards the men of the world that he made the remark which is so often quoted to defend a very dangerous practice. We never find the apostle descending from the high eminence he occupied to drink into the spirit of the world. It is not necessary to specify what are the amusements to which I refer, because you are sufficiently aware of their tendency. Do not listen to any suggestions to mingle in them, and, least of all, to the plea of doing good to the irreligious. You will never do them any good by forgetting what is due to your own character. They will be the first to despise you for inconsistency. The cause of Christ will suffer in their estimation, and you yourselves will sustain great harm; therefore, "*walk in wisdom towards them that are without.*"

II. Our close and intimate friendships are not to be formed with those who are not Christians.

It is more easy to imbibe an evil contagion than it is to expel it, or to diffuse around a good moral influence. The one is palatable to the corruption of our fallen nature, the other demands the constant exercise of self-denial. We cannot be so sure of imparting good to the irreligious, as we may be certain of receiving injury from too intimate an association with them. Do not, therefore, choose your companions from the world. Endeavour to do unto those *who are without* all the good you can; but they must not be your chosen friends.

The precepts of religion on this point are very clear and decisive. "*Be not unequally yoked. Come out from among them, and be ye separate.*" The Jews were peremptorily admonished on this point. And who will deny, that for Christians to abstain from walking with men of the world, or entering into close and tender relationships with those who are enemies of the cross of Christ, is as much their duty as it was that of the Jews? Is not such conduct as likely to alienate *us* from God, as it was to lead *them* into idolatry?

It is quite true that Jesus mingled with sinners, nor is it contended that Christians are to withdraw themselves *entirely* from the world, or from communion with the ungodly who are in it; that is clearly impossible. But before we assume to ourselves the same freedom of intercourse with sinners as the Redeemer permitted to himself, it behooves us to pause for a moment, and remember the amazing difference between an immaculate being and fallen creatures ever prone to sin. He was tainted with no moral disease. The malady had not affected Him. He might come into close contact with ungodly men without injury, since He was "*holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.*" But we are in a very different condition. We have much remaining

within us that has a close affinity with evil. We cannot, therefore, in this respect, make the example of Christ an absolute rule; for, if we did, the cautionary warning of the text would be nullified.

III. We must make no secret of our being on the Lord's side.

A profession of religion cannot be secret if we would discharge the duties inseparable from it. We must, therefore, be decided. To be scrupulous of avowing our attachment to Jesus Christ is a conduct eminently unworthy of our character, and highly displeasing to Him. If we are frank and open in that avowal, and if our conduct and principles harmonize, there is a feeling of decorum observed among men of the world, which will generally induce them to conduct themselves with propriety towards us. They will also despair of effecting any breach in the barriers which surround us. Those who are firm and decided in matters of religion, have much less to fear from the ridicule and opposition of the men of the world than those who are halting between two opinions. The irresolute are always exposed to attack, partly because they invite it by their indecision, and partly because they present more opportunities for making it successfully. But a man who is armed by strong resolve and holy determination to be on the Lord's side, intrenches himself behind ramparts much too formidable to be easily overthrown. This open profession of religion is enjoined upon us by Jesus Christ, and a compliance with HIS commands is one mode of obeying the apostolic precept, "*Walk in wisdom towards them that are without.*"

IV. We may now very properly inquire what sort of conduct we should pursue, in the hope of inducing the ungodly to come over to us.

It is not inconsistent with the highest Christian principle to endeavour to *win over* the enemies of the cross. And if we attempt this in humble dependance on the Divine blessing, and according to Scripture precept, we may be successful.

1. *We should be very careful to cultivate those parts of conduct on which the men of the world justly set a high value.* If they see that we practise the principles which they *know* belong to the Christian character, they will give us credit for higher excellences; but if we fall short, they will feel contempt for us. There are many virtues which men in general esteem, because they tend to promote their interests. Strict integrity, ingenuousness of temper, sincerity, faithfulness, are virtues of high importance, because the welfare of society is bound up in them. He that deals in falsehood breaks up the social compact. "*Lie not one to another*" is a precept enforced upon us by a kind of *double* authority. A Christian is bound to cultivate the ordinary virtues, such as those already specified, in the highest degree, and to regulate his conduct by the great law, "*To do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you.*" He who makes a profession of religion, and in the common transactions of life violates his word, uses fraud, is insincere, or unfaithful, hardens

many hearts in their opposition to religion, and does more mischief than the consistent conduct of very many believers can counteract. If you have not made up your mind to act honestly *before* you come into the Church, do not come into it at all; for when you touch the elements of the Lord's Supper, you will "*eat and drink condemnation to yourself, not discerning the Lord's body.*" You will hear, as it were, a voice indignantly inquiring, "*Who hath required this at your hands?*" Though the men of the world attach, perhaps, more importance to these things than they deserve, they will notice if you come short of them; and, assuredly, you will be utterly inexcusable in their eyes, if you do not cultivate them in your life and deportment.

If you do not practise the first elements of religion, how can you attain to the highest virtues? You can never secure any reputation for science, if you remain ignorant of its first principles. How could you become profound critics, if you did not know the alphabet? Yet those persons would not be guilty of greater folly, or be more absurd, who would assert that such things were possible, than any professing Christian pretending to a knowledge of Divine things, and failing to practise these minor virtues.

2. *We should cultivate whatever is lovely.* There are many parts of conduct which fall under this class—such as sympathy, gratitude, humility, and gentleness; together with a kind attention to the feelings of others, and making the happiness of others an important object; much more, of course, avoiding giving them pain. The tenderness of Christ is diffused through his Church. The exhibition of it has a strong tendency to recommend religion. Abraham laid aside his own interests, and would have no contention with Lot.

He that supposes *love* forms no part of Christian virtue, mistakes one of its main features. The grand design of Christianity is to excite it to activity, and to diffuse its influence universally. It tends to ennoble man, and make him lovely. All pride, and haughtiness, and roughness in manner or speech, are quite uncongenial to the spirit of Christianity.

Recollect how important it is to walk in the exercise of such virtues. How dismal would the condition of man be without them! We would not confine them to the present number of the faithful; we think on the whole family of man in a perishing state. I trust, my Christian brethren, that you feel bowels of mercies for the world in which you live; that you long to see the time when all Israel shall be saved—when there shall be prepared in Mount Zion a feast for all nations. That an inconceivable number shall participate in this feast, will partly arise from the holy virtues of the Church, and partly from the ministry of the word. But that will be insufficient, unless Christians shine like lights in the world. They must hold forth the word of life. It was this which made an impression on the minds of men in

former times; and in the present day, when similar conduct is maintained, heaven will seem to have come in contact with earth, and its glories and blessings to have descended upon it. Unless, as professing Christians, we do so, and live unto Christ, by exhibiting the virtues of Christianity, we do not conduct ourselves as becometh the gospel. But if we act out our principles, and vindicate our pretensions to the Christian character, we shall approve ourselves faithful to the great Head of the Church; religion will appear to have come from God, and to be in harmony with his transcendent excellence and glory.

V. Hence it follows, that the duties which devolve on Christians are twofold, in relation to this precept.

Although we cannot search the heart, we can distinguish those persons to whom the text applies—"*those who are without*," and also those who "*walk in wisdom towards them.*" And we distinguish the former, not simply because they have not joined the Church, but because they continue to live in sin.

It is of the highest moment that *we walk consistently.* The men of the world will do many things which they would condemn, and very properly, too, in us. They expect us to walk by a higher rule, because we profess to do so. If you would not inflame their prejudices, you must remember your high calling. If you *do so*, they will say of you, as was said of Daniel, they "*could find no matter against him, except in the law of his God.*"

This rule attaches to no particular class of persons in the Church of Christ, but to all who make a profession of religion. If we look at the conduct of Christ, everything was in perfect harmony — every emotion was in its place — all was so natural, that we might suppose it to be easy to act in the same manner, there is so much propriety in such deportment. Yet there was a majesty in his conduct which can only be induced by his own Spirit.

Now, although we cannot reach so high a standard, yet we are to walk as becometh the gospel. Men naturally expect that those who are intent upon higher objects than the good of this world should display a moderation respecting it, to preserve a feeling of holy elevation above it. In all the transactions of life, he will take care to be on the safe side; he will rather suffer injury than injure others. He will be harmless as a dove, and at the same time wise as a serpent. He will remember the spirit of the precepts of Christ, "*If a man take thy cloak, give him thy coat also;*" nor will he forget the grand rule, "*Let your moderation be known to all men.*"

Men of the world expect Christians *to be men of peace.* They will not forget the blessing which Christ pronounced on the *peace-makers*—that they are to "*follow peace with all men*"—and that, to attain this end, they must not scruple at making sacrifices. It is natural that they should expect the Christian to show a peaceful temper. There are few things more calculated to in

spire reverence for religion than the manifestation of a peaceful disposition.

It is necessary, in order to maintain this state of mind, that we refrain from becoming zealous, officious *partisans* in matters of mere temporal importance. Christians need not take the lead in agitating the public mind in things of mere secular moment. They can generally do their duty without such very great prominence. They ought to hold very decided opinions, and express them openly, and with firmness and honesty. They should abide by them when expressed. But, in doing so, they are not to take up a side, or a party, *without* moderation. In things belonging to religion, which involve the best interests of humanity, and the glory of God, they can come from their quiet retirement with great power. They will come from their closet with an energy so sanctified as to give a decisive influence to public opinion on any question whatever.

It is a question of no small importance, *what method we are to adopt in making known to the men of the world our sentiments in reference to religion.* Nothing requires more prudence and wisdom than the communication of religious opinions and feelings to those who are strangers to them. We must watch for the suitable opportunity and state of mind, so that the truth we present may take hold. Persons in inferior stations in life can rarely presume to instruct those who are above them in rank. But there are times when servants may suggest truths to their masters, or admonish on account of some flagrant sin, with the happiest effect; and if it be done with modesty and seriousness, a good impression will be the result. In those instances where the mind is subdued, and the heart is softened by sorrow, a word spoken in season, by the lowest to the highest, is like a nail fastened in a sure place.

We shall show, by such conduct, that we do not consider religion to consist in always talking about it; that it is our aim to *live Christianity*, rather than to make an ostentatious profession of it. It is of great importance to be "*able to give a reason for the hope that is within us.*" Our speech should be seasoned with grace to the hearers, being mingled with salt. Christ leads us to expect that we shall have questions proposed which we ought to be prepared to answer. Men of the world may sometimes ask us why we pursue a conduct so different from what they do; and we ought to be able to satisfy them. Hence another reason for the precept, "*Walk in wisdom towards those who are without.*"

While we should remember to walk in a manner worthy of the dignity of religion, we should seek to make it appear lovely. There are some who, when they speak of it, speak only of its terrors. But this is only a partial view of it. Christ wounds in order to heal. He speaks of terrors, but he also points to a place of safety. Although he brings us, as it were, down to death, he restores us to life, that we might know and feel the power of the remedy.

In conversing on the subject of religion, do not be anxious to dilate on your own *personal* experience; rather converse on the great truths of religion in general. Let this be done with seriousness, and in the true spirit of piety. To talk of these high and holy themes in a light and frivolous manner is highly reprehensible. You will find, with all eminent Christians, a delightful association of solemnity and joy, of gravity and cheerfulness. This is a temper we should all seek to obtain and cultivate. When men engage in any great object of a worldly nature, they are serious. How much more proper for those to cultivate such a temper and habit of mind, who are engaged in the Divine service, and are continually hearing the voice of God saying unto them, "*Walk before me in purity?*"

We must not only be innocent, but seek to do good. Those who endeavour to do good, as a grand end of the Christian life, will come forth and have a part in the second resurrection. The tree that brings forth good fruit will be preserved. We are exhorted to be useful in our day and generation. Christians are not to shut themselves up in an atmosphere of solitude. They are to "*be perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect.*" The Divine Being does not shut himself up in solitary grandeur, nor dwell amid a silent contemplation of his own perfections; He comes forth from his pavilion, and sends out the streams of his glory and goodness to the most distant province of his vast dominions. Therefore, says our Lord, when speaking of the goodness of God, "*be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his rain to descend upon the just and the unjust.*"

Let me press upon you the importance of this precept, by reminding you that you are not only to be blessed, but are to become blessings to others. You are expected to bring forth fruit, to the glory of God and the good of man. Whatever may be your station in life, if you are masters or servants, high or low, you are to be earnestly concerned for those about you.

The Church is the salt of the earth and the light of the world. As its members obey this precept, they will diffuse light around, until the Church shall so increase as to illumine every dark spot. There are no longer any signs in the heavens. The voice of no prophet is now heard. No sound now comes forth from the hidden glory. God speaks to us only by his providence and his word. How is his cause to go on, except it be sustained by the activity and graces of his people? The chief thing is, not what we are called, but what we produce. "*The axe is laid to the root of the tree, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*" If we are redeemed — if we are to walk in heavenly places with Christ in white — being earthy, let us prepare ourselves for that dignity and happiness, by *now* putting on the garments of light and salvation.

XXIII.

DECISION IN RELIGION.*

JOSHUA, XXIV., 15: *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

THE connexion of these words constitutes an address which Joshua delivered to the heads of the tribes of Israel. Knowing that his end was drawing nigh, he called them together at Shechem, that they might hear from his lips what he then thought would be his dying admonition.

As Moses had been prohibited from leading the people into the promised land, in consequence of his disobedience on one remarkable occasion, Joshua was selected by God to succeed him in the office of leader of the people. He led them in triumph to their promised possession. His name implies the service. It was formerly Osheah, and was changed by Moses into Jehoshua, and by contraction became Joshua. The term imports a *Saviour*. In many respects he was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who brings his people out of bondage, and conducts them through this world into their heavenly inheritance.

There were qualities displayed by Joshua, when filling a subordinate station, which marked him out as destined for future pre-eminence. So Christ was first put under the law; but in his humiliation He was anointed with "*the oil of gladness*," and now "*He is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high.*" But our business, on this occasion, is more immediately with the holy resolution expressed in the text to adhere to the service of God, and the exhortation, addressed to others, to enter on a similar course.

I. We shall offer a few remarks as to the occasion on which these words were uttered.

It too often happens that persons who move in the elevated walks of life, or who are deeply involved in the cares of business, or who occupy stations of important trust, endeavour to make these things an *excuse* for neglecting the service of God. And the ground usually taken by them is, that they are placed in these circumstances by Divine Providence. The conduct of Joshua administers a severe rebuke to such persons, and shows the extreme impropriety of their temper and spirit. He exhibits a totally different example. He makes religion the *primary* concern, the grand business of life. He withdraws his attention from political cares, endeavours to lead the people in the

* Reported in the Evangelist.

pursuit of higher objects, and to impress on them a sense of the paramount duty of serving God. For this purpose he convened them at Shechem. It was at this place, celebrated in sacred history, that God first revealed himself to Abraham, when called out of Ur in Chaldea. It was near to Shiloh, where the ark was deposited, and near, also, to Joshua's abode. He had called the tribes together at Shiloh on a previous occasion, and for a similar purpose. But his life had been prolonged beyond expectation; and, desirous of improving fresh opportunities of usefulness, he summoned them again. *Now* there was little doubt that he would very soon leave the world, and he proceeds to address the children of Israel under this solemn and affecting impression.

Every one of distinction was here present. Both the elders and chiefs of families were deputed to be there. To them he unfolds his design, which was to induce them, in the most solemn manner, to declare that *they* also would adhere to the service of God. He endeavours to accomplish this purpose:

By calling to their remembrance the dealings of God towards them. He reminds them of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, of the mighty hand which brought them through the Red Sea, and overwhelmed the hosts of Pharaoh beneath its waters. He recounts the signal victories they had achieved over their enemies, calls to their remembrance their triumphant entry into the promised land, and expatiates on the quiet repose they enjoyed in their long-anticipated inheritance. And now, while they were under the influence of the emotions which such recollections would kindle, he calls upon them to enter into a new covenant with God. "Choose ye, therefore, this day whom ye will serve."

Religion should be the subject, not of compulsion, but of choice. When it is said, "*Compel* them to come in," it is to be understood, not as referring to actual force, but to the power of persuasion and of truth. God deals with men as rational creatures. He proposes adequate motives for choosing his service. He sets before them life and death, blessing and cursing; and exhibits the responsibility arising out of such knowledge, the happy results of a compliance with the precept, and the terrible consequences of a refusal.

Religion should also be a matter of deliberate choice. Joshua conducts this affair with great discretion and skill. He announces his own intention to serve God, and admonishes them against turning aside to other gods. The people felt the force of his appeal, and exclaimed, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods!" Not satisfied with this avowal, he sets before them the difficulties to be encountered in carrying out such a resolve; for he knew the deceitfulness of the human heart, and that they were a stiff-necked people; he therefore tells them, "Ye cannot serve God." He deals faithfully with them; he desires to detect hypocrisy, and keep his eye on those who were unwilling to serve the Lord; but the people said, "*We will serve the Lord.*" He proceeds at once to effect his design, and calls upon them, in the most impressive manner, to enter

upon this new covenant. And when they had again expressed their full determination to do so, he said, "*Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord to serve Him. And they said, We are witnesses.*" These words were written in a book, and a great stone was set up there, to indicate the important nature of the transaction which had taken place.

There was a particular reason for this solemn ratification of their vow. Joshua knew that the children of Israel were prone to idolatry. He said to them, "*Put now, therefore, away from you the strange gods which are among you.*" They had not destroyed them, and though they did not openly worship them, still they had kept them; like Jacob's family, who, when commanded to put away their gods, hid them under an oak-tree, in all probability near to the place where Joshua then stood.

This resolution to serve was a very noble one. He would not serve alone. His house and his family were also included. He could not command the tribes, since his authority was at an end. But he still held authority over his household, and the force of his example, and the influence of his character, would be generally felt. It is too often to be lamented, that heads of families who profess to be religious, manifest but little concern for the members of their family, or, having given up all thoughts of religion themselves, still cherish some concern for their children, and express an anxious hope that *they* may become truly pious. But every true servant of God will be especially anxious for himself first, and then for his own flesh and blood. He will not wait for them, but lead the way, and set them a bright example.

Had all the tribes forsaken the service of the Supreme Being, he still would have adhered to it. This is one of the most certain tests of true attachment to religion, when we can stand alone for it, and dare to be singular—when we can renounce the world and assert our allegiance to God.

II. Let us inquire what this resolution involves.

It is very comprehensive. It takes within its range the whole of religion. It is a solemn contract with God to recognise his authority and to obey his will. True religion will always lead its subjects to this. While it teaches us to feel our utter insufficiency, it excites a feeling of devout and constant dependance on God.

1. *This resolution includes a solemn determination to attend with regularity and devotion to Divine worship.* The Supreme Being is to be worshipped, not merely by the prostration of our bodies before Him, but in the devout prostration of the mind in his presence. It is a sin of no common magnitude to neglect this duty.

Infidelity has been invariably marked by the decline of religious worship. It has sometimes boasted of numbers, wealth, and power, and has often plumed itself on the homage of great intellect before its shrine. But its disciples have never had sufficient zeal to unite themselves in fellowship, nor have they ever imbodied their notions of the

Deity. This is an irrefragable proof of total blindness amid the pretended enjoyment of the clearest light.

God is a spirit, and is to be worshipped in spirit and truth. The prostration of the body is only an external index of the state of the mind. Worship is the homage of the understanding and the heart. To this all good men have addicted themselves; and where eminent piety is attained, it will be sure to manifest itself in a very eager and constant attendance to the duties connected with Divine worship.

2. *But religion is not confined to the sanctuary. The service of God embraces the whole life and conduct.* To serve Him is to have habitual regard to his will. That will must be consulted on all occasions. It will be our law, from which there is no appeal, and when known, cheerfully obeyed. The service of God diffuses itself through every thought and action. That religion which does not go forth with us into the world is worth but little. And all this is expressed in the resolution of Joshua.

There are three ingredients necessary to acceptable service.

First, *sincerity*. God requireth truth in the inward parts. If we seek the applause of men, we lose our reward. Any motive to religion less than a sincere desire to serve God, as the primary inducement, destroys our claim to the title of being his servants. If we do any thing good merely from *habit*, *self-interest*, or for the *sake of our health and reputation*, we are not acting up to the declaration made by Joshua. Religion has its source in the mind. It leads us to cherish habitual reverence for God, to delight in Him, and to make Him the beginning and the end. Thus a good man keeps back nothing. He feels that he is not his own, and God is all in all.

Secondly, *universal obedience*. No man is *perfect*. Yet a Christian entertains respect for the *whole* law. He does not in effect repeal a part, and obey the rest. He knows that the same Being who commands obedience to any part of the law, enjoins obedience to all. There is this grand principle of agreement in true religion. While we do not inculcate the attainment of *perfection*, yet the good man cannot allow of any sin; and a sense of his imperfection will supply ample motives to watchfulness and prayer.

Thirdly, *permanent adherence*. He that serves God under occasional circumstances is not a servant in deed and in truth. A true servant practises constant obedience. It is the character of a real disciple of Christ, to adhere to Him and to his service.

Those who believe, and are soon offended, are not of Christ. But they who follow the Lamb without the camp, bearing his reproach, whose life is a continued struggle against sin, and a holy imitation of his example, nobly sustain their profession, and are really his servants.

There are many of you who have joined yourselves to God's people. If you have found his service to be an evil thing, draw back again to the world. But if you have found religion's ways to be ways of pleasantness, and her paths peace—if she points to a blessed immortality, and assures you of final conquest, cling fast to her for se-

curity. Never apostatize from your Master's cause. If He has brought pardon and peace to your soul—if He has called you with a high and holy calling, and sent his Spirit to give you light and life, will you, can you hesitate to obey Him? No! Such experience will bind you to the cross, and fasten you to the horns of the altar. You will cheerfully embark for eternity; and when any thing interferes with the habitual claims of this service, you will rebuke the intrusion, and, in the words of the apostle, avow your inflexible determination to live and die in it. "*I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*"

III. We proceed to consider the motives and reasons which may be assigned to induce you to unite in the resolution of Joshua.

1. *It is our duty to serve God on account of the relation we sustain to Him*, and the various mercies we receive from his hand.

This relation is most intimate; it is that subsisting between the Creator and his creatures. We can form but a very inadequate idea of this relation, because we can create nothing. We may modify the forms of almost all substances; we can cause matter to enter into new combinations, but we cannot create an atom. We may, by strong effort, control our passions, and modify our desires and thoughts, but we are unable to *originate* one of them. God is the Creator of all things, and most appropriately styled the *Father of our spirits.*

He who gives us powers of thought and action has surely a right to assign limits to their operation and exercise. He who is the giver of happiness has surely a right to appoint the means of its attainment. Shall the thing formed say unto Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? If the potter has power over the clay, to mould and fashion it according to his own will, God has a right to enforce his laws on all his rational creatures, and to demand their obedience to them.

He is not only our Creator, but our Benefactor. We derive every blessing from Him. Our health, our property, our friends, our lives, our faculties, are equally the gifts of his bounty. The capacity for enjoyment, and the sources of the supply, are alike from Him. All the endearments of life, all the streams of human happiness, flow from God.

But He binds you to his service by more unspeakable mercies. He has sent his Son into the world to reconcile you to himself, by dying in your room, by atoning for your sins, by taking away the curse of a broken law and bearing it himself. He has revealed heaven to you, that you might aspire to its attainment. He has given you the society of the saints, the means of grace, the delights of the sanctuary, and the fellowship and aid of angels. What, in short, has He not done for you as the God of creation and grace? Then *serve Him with fear and trembling.*

2. *The constitution of our nature has no other suitable end but his service.*

The grand distinction of our nature is the capacity for religion. Inferior animals have not this faculty. Hence the vast superiority of

man over the brute. We not only possess reason in a very high degree, but the power of exercising that reason on the most momentous truths, such as right and wrong, good and evil, time and eternity.

He, therefore, who refuses to serve God, loses the grand end of life. He misses the ultimate purpose of his existence. Hence the degrading terms in which the sacred writers speak of such persons. They are described as the *vassals of Satan*, the *slaves of flesh and sin*, as *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, as those who are *without God and without hope in the world*.

If the Creator had not designed man for religion, He would have given him a widely different constitution. But when He created him, it was for himself. He made him to be the high-priest of this glorious temple, to offer unto Him constant praise. The other parts of creation are vocal with praise. They are in subjection to man. Surely the lord of creation was intended to answer even a higher purpose; and it is clearly our duty to *serve* God, and that duty, in part, springs from the nature of the constitution with which we are endowed.

3. *The fact that, as wicked creatures, we are not willing to serve God, is not sufficient to justify our refusal.*

Joshua seemed to be quite aware of the existence of such a disposition, and that it might be taken as the ground of excuse. "*If it seem evil unto you*," said he, "*to serve God, choose you this day whom ye will serve.*" But this indisposition cannot justify us. It is our interest to obey the precepts of the gospel. They tend to eradicate disorder from our nature; and to disobey them is to cling to this disorder with a blind and infatuated obstinacy. Nor does religion demand any sacrifice for which she does not provide an ample compensation.

Should it appear that such a line of conduct as that we are now enforcing on you requires a fortitude and a resolution which you do not possess, be not dismayed, for the Spirit of grace and truth has engaged to supply you with all needful aid.

The doctrine of the necessity of the new birth—of our possessing a new heart and a right spirit, is next in importance to the atonement. The one implies the other, and there can be no real religion where they do not both exist.

Then consider the rewards which attend the service of God. In this life, all necessary supplies, and in the world to come, life everlasting. Hear what the Scripture saith: "*Blessed is that servant whom, when his lord cometh, he findeth watching.*" No act of service, however trifling, however insignificant, will lose its reward: "*A cup of cold water given to a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward.*"

Remember, it is impossible you can be neutral. "*He that is not with me*," exclaims the Saviour, "*is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.*" To-day is your own, to-morrow is in the shadow of the Divine hand. It will be disclosed—but *may be* not for you. It may be disclosed to you—not in time, but in eternity.

The claims of Christ are such, that to be neutral is to be hostile. Indifference to Him is opposition. His majesty is so great, that He will bear no rival, nor will He brook continuous delay. If He is not your king, He is your foe. You must serve Him, and Him only. The state of the human heart is such that you cannot be neutral.

Is it undignified to enlist in this service? Think of Joshua, one of the greatest and most eminent individuals, both for rank and ability, that ever lived. But why mention him? All the wise and good in every age have been the servants of God. They all bear the same testimony to the dignity and happiness which religion confers. Think, too, of God himself, inconceivably glorious and great, who fills heaven and earth with his glory, rules all worlds, and holds at his own disposal the destiny of every intelligent creature. Can it be beneath *you* to serve Him? Is it possible that his service can be unworthy your notice, whom the angels delight to honour and serve? Go and ask every one who has served God what they think of it, after long experience. Inquire whether any of his servants repented of his service when they came to die. Repented of it! No, it was their highest joy that they ever served Him at all; and their only grief, that they had served Him so little. They died triumphantly; and when looking back on the past, they rejoiced that some portion of their lives had been so employed, and they exulted in the prospect of meeting their Divine Master, and hearing Him say, "*Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*" God grant that you, my hearers, may heartily, and at this very moment, unite in declaring that you, too, will serve the Lord.

XXIV.

THE HEART DEMANDED.*

PROVERBS, xxiii., 26: *My son, give me thy heart.*

[Preached at Maze Pond, London, February 17, 1799.]

ALL kinds of false religion which have been practised in the world may be resolved into a vain attempt to supply the place of giving the heart to God. The superstitions of the Church of Rome, the fantastic ceremonies and rites practised by the Mohammedans and many classes of pagans, the penances and mortifications on which so many rely, but which cease where the light of Divine truth prevails, are but substitutes for the simple duty of giving God the heart. It is of the utmost importance to trace all religious conduct to its source, and to fix in our minds that this is the root of all piety which is acceptable to God, the giving Him our heart.

In explaining and enforcing this duty, considered as an address by

* From the notes of W. B. Gurney, Esq.

God to man, I shall propose for your consideration a few of the reasons and grounds on which this duty is obligatory.

In the first place, *God deserves our hearts.* He is entitled to them by claims which it is impossible to resist. The favours we receive from God bind us by grateful attachment to give Him our hearts. All the blessings which we have enjoyed in the course of our existence, all we now enjoy, and all we hope to partake of, flow from the unmerited bounty of our heavenly Father. "From Him cometh every good and perfect gift." The care and tenderness bestowed by Providence upon our earliest years, it is evident, we had no share in procuring. It was God who poured that tenderness into the hearts of our parents, of which we received the benefit. It was God that conferred upon us all those blessings which have distinguished us in the subsequent years of our lives, who raised up all those connexions and friends, and endearing relations in life, from which our comforts have sprung. He is the cause of all causes, the ultimate spring of all good, though he uses second means; the Benefactor and the Author of all being. If, then, there be any claim which gratitude has upon our hearts, this claim is enforced by God.

Besides, the infinite excellences of the Divine Nature themselves are such as challenge our highest regard. All that is excellent in the creature is derived from God. The lustre of his perfections eclipses every thing in heaven or on earth. The beauty of his character is such as, when properly perceived, excites the highest admiration, and fills up the whole centre of perfection. God, separate from the benefits derived from Him, is in himself entitled to our highest esteem.

In the second place, we ought to give God our hearts, *because this is the great and principal demand he makes upon us.* He is not only entitled to our hearts, but he demands them at our hands. This is the principal requisition he makes of sinful men, "My son, give me thy heart." This is the sum and substance of all the precepts of the Divine law. When God solemnly delivered his laws to the children of Israel in the wilderness, this was the principal: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. This," says our Saviour, in explaining the law, "is the first and great command." All the precepts of religion are summed up in this, because a love to our fellow-creatures dictates an attention to all those subordinate rules of general conduct upon which their happiness depends. "Love is the fulfilling of the law;" it "works no ill to its neighbour;" and so love to God implies a coincidence of our will with his, the patient endurance of all He inflicts, and the prompt discharge of all He prescribes—the due homage and affection of worship; not merely the prostration of the body and the language of the lips, but the expression of the heart; the root of all clearly is the heart. "Man looketh at the outward appearace, but the Lord looketh at the heart." All the substitutes which men can possibly devise, where the heart is not really devoted to God, will be of no account in his sight. The language of the deepest humiliation, and the expression of the most ardent attachment, will be an abomination in

the sight of God, if the heart does not accompany them, if they are not streams proceeding by a direct course from that fountain. He strips off every disguise, and looks to the heart. This is the great requisition the Divine Being makes at our hands. He asks not splendid temples, costly sacrifices, nor pompous forms of worship. The universe is so formed as in many respects to reflect his glory and grandeur; but nothing in created nature, nothing in external worship, is dear to Him, where the heart is foreign and alien to Him. There is no place so satisfactory for Him to rest in as the heart of his intelligent creatures; a mind penetrated with a sense of sin, touched with gratitude, glowing with love, and prostrating itself in the deepest humiliation before Him, this is the place of his rest, and He bows the heaven itself and comes down to take possession of such a temple as is furnished by the heart of that man.

Thirdly, another reason why we should give Him our hearts is, *that He alone can fill our hearts.* There is nothing out of God that is sufficiently capacious and permanent to fill the heart of man. The natural heart forms to itself ideas of happiness that never will be realized, notions of felicity to which there is nothing answerable in the whole circle of created things. It dwells, as it were, in a land of shadows, and images to itself a greatness which the infinite abysses of space are not able to comprehend. Nothing can satisfy that general thirst after happiness which exists where God is not apprehended and enjoyed. Ask that man who has been the most successful in his worldly affairs, whether he has had his heart filled with its objects. Ask the avaricious man whether he has accumulated wealth enough to fill the void in his heart. He has engrossed much of it, but he is not satisfied. Ask the ambitious man whether he is satisfied with honour, whether he has enough of the applause of the world, whether power has poured itself upon him in a sufficiently copious stream. So far from it, it has only irritated his passions, and rendered him more susceptible of censure, more touched by contempt, more affected by reproach. The void in his heart widens, and he becomes more eager after glory. Thus it is that there is a void in the human heart, which is never completely satisfied until the love of God is shed abroad there. The chasm widens in proportion as created objects fall into it. The particular appetite may be satisfied for the moment, but the thirst after general happiness is increased. But God is sufficient to fill the heart of man—yes, of all men—and to diffuse rapture and joy over the inhabitants of heaven itself. No mind is so capacious, no heart is so large and extensive, that God cannot fill it; no desire so great, but there is sufficient in the beneficence of God to satisfy it.

It is true, a good man always seeks after more of the enjoyment of God than he tastes in the present world; and, in this sense, his heart is not filled; but this is for want of a sufficient medium of communication between him and the Supreme Being. The deficiency is not in the object itself, but in the relation we bear to that object, and the imperfect communication we have at present with it. The ocean is sufficiently immense, but there are impediments that obstruct the

streams, that prevent their entrance into our heart. Nothing will fill the heart but God. The experience of all ages, the vanity of life, the restlessness of the human passions, the disorders introduced by sin, and the conviction of a future state, all tend to teach us that God is the only adequate and sufficient portion of the human mind.

In the fourth place, we ought to give our hearts to God *as a certain means, and the only means, of introducing peace into our hearts.* When we have given our hearts to God, and he is enthroned there, the necessary consequence will be, a degree of peace will prevail there. Until this is effected, there will be a collision and an interference between the claims of religion and those of the world, which can never be adjusted. There will be a contradiction between the convictions of conscience, those convictions which depravity can never totally erase, and the unsanctified desires of the mind, which can never be reconciled. The Jews were accustomed to offer their salutations to their friends in these terms: "Peace be with you." In doing this, they expressed a wish that their friends might possess all those good things which friendship could dictate. They wished them health, peace of conscience, the favour of the Supreme Being; every thing was comprehended in the term "peace." But the Scriptures tell us that the wicked have no peace: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." This is equivalent to saying that the wicked have no true happiness, for in denying that they have peace, the Scriptures deny that they have true happiness. And this will appear to be the case the more we explore the subject. Conscience will be heard, and her "still small voice" will destroy all peace. The consciousness that a man is not right, that he is under the threat of God, will destroy his enjoyment, perplex his mind, and fill him with inward confusion. He will read his character, as Belshazzar did, on the wall even of a palace. Oh, how many things may, in the hand of God, be the means of bringing his sins to his remembrance, and of disquieting his mind, so that even in the midst of mirth his heart is heavy, and the countenance betrays the tumult of the soul!

Besides this, there will be a predominance of anxiety arising from the very nature of worldly care, until we have given our hearts to God. The solicitude about the affairs of the world will grow and strengthen till it becomes overwhelming. The love of God is the master passion which will cast out the evil and tormenting effects of worldly care. The solicitude, the restlessness, and anxiety of which many men appear to be the subjects, are not the effect of any great calamity, but of the constant insecurity with which earthly things are held; and nothing will cure this great disease of the mind but the love of God.

In addition to this, the edge of the calamities of life will be blunted by giving our hearts to God. He who has given his heart to God is secure with respect to his main interest. He is able after every calamity to go into the sanctuary, and sing, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off

from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Yes, he will rejoice in God as his salvation. He carries his riches with him, because he is rich towards God; his happiness with him, because no being can destroy it. No angel can step between him and the eternal throne, and intercept his prayers or the communications of the Divine favour. The love of God shed abroad in his heart, and the influences of the Divine Spirit, are the great means of allaying the anxiety of the human mind, and of introducing peace and serenity, a peace which "passeth all understanding," joy and peace in believing.

In the fifth place, *if we give our hearts to God, this will render a compliance with every other demand of the Divine Being easy and delightful.* Giving our hearts to God will have a mighty influence to make every other part of the Divine requisitions satisfactory and easy. When love to God is planted in the heart, the fruits of righteousness will spring up in rich abundance. This is a seed of immortal vigour. When love to God prevails in the heart, the duties of religion, instead of being matters of servile restraint, will be the most pleasing occupation of the mind. To retire for self-examination, for prayer, and meditation, and reading the Scriptures, will not be painful to that man who has given his heart to God. It will be the child hiding himself beneath the wing of paternal love. It will be the confidential intercourse of love and affection. It will be to go from care, and vanity, and vexation, to God as his chief joy. The love of God having thus touched the heart, though before hard as a rock, the streams will flow. What is the cause of our public assemblies exhibiting so little piety, so much coldness and indifference to Divine things? What is the reason of that languid attention we so often witness? Does it not arise from the heart not being given to God? How different is this from the general assembly of the Church above! There all is love and all is joy. David rejoiced at the thought of engaging with his friends in the worship of God, because he felt supreme delight in God. He could say, "I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." To forsake all and follow Christ, to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him, will be a duty utterly impracticable unless we have given up our hearts to Him; our conduct will be determined by the state of our heart. We cannot forsake all for God, unless we have first given God our hearts.

In the sixth place, we have peculiar reason for giving our hearts to God, *because the Divine Being has manifested himself to us under such characters as are calculated to attract our hearts.* Did God appear in Scripture in no other character than that of an avenging judge, it would be impossible to give Him our hearts, upon the principles, at least, of human nature; but "God is love." "God was in Christ," before the world began, "reconciling the world unto himself." It is the peculiarity of the gospel, that while it represents God in all the

terrors of his justice, these are united with all the riches of his mercy. "God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." He was pleased to compassionate us in our sinful state. He spreads out the arms of paternal tenderness to us. His language is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God; besides me there is no Saviour." "Fury is not in me." "Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." This is the language of Divine mercy; and is it not calculated, especially when connected with the fact of the only-begotten Son of God dying on the cross, to attract our hearts? Is it not calculated to destroy enmity, to speak peace to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh? There is no impediment, then, with God; the impediment is only in ourselves.

In the last place, I would observe, as another inducement to give our hearts to God, *that it will be the most effectual preparation for death and eternity.* Could the sinner flatter himself that he could forever remain at a distance from God, he might anticipate a sort of peace without giving his heart to God, though he would be disappointed in the result; but you must meet God as your friend or your enemy. Your subjection to Him cannot be thrown off. It lies with you, then, in what character you meet Him. Meet Him you must; and how awful will it be to depart from this world without having given your hearts to God! To meet Him as your enemy; to appear before Him with the alienation of your hearts unsubdued; to find yourselves in the presence of that Being who rules in heaven and on earth, and whose power none can withstand, when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat!" Oh, how awful will it be, if you have not made your peace with God, if you have not given your heart to Him! You feel now that to meet Him is terrible, because you are conscious that you are at enmity with Him; but, when you can no longer keep at a distance from Him, what will it be to meet Him? You will "call upon the rocks to fall upon you to hide you from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;" to hide you from the presence of your Judge! The sinner who dies without having given his heart to God, will then meet with the full accomplishment of his wishes. His great desire has been to keep at a distance from God, and this will be awfully realized. He has been invited to come into the presence of God, invited in the tenderest accents; but he has refused, and now he will be summoned into that presence with a voice which will strike terror into his soul, and then will be banished forever from Him. God will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." He wished to have no intercourse with God, and now God will have no inter-

course with him. An everlasting gulf will be fixed between God and him, and he will then find that absence from God is the perfection of misery and wo. But, on the contrary, if our hearts are now given to God, death will be a source of the most delightful satisfaction. When death removes a good man from the present world, it carries him to his Father's house. While it removes the wicked man from all he loved, it removes the good man from all that afflicted him here; the wicked man is hurried away from all his treasures, while the good man is stripped only of his infirmities and sufferings. Every day the Christian is advancing nearer to his ultimate good. He considers life as a journey, a pilgrimage, and looks to the end of it with satisfaction and delight. He now enjoys that good which he eagerly sought on earth. He reaps the full reward of all his prayers and all his sufferings. His language while on earth was, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness," and now the auspicious morn is come.

What is the reason, my friends, that death is viewed with such different feelings by the good man and the bad? It is because of the different state of their hearts towards God. It is this difference which, in the one case, covers futurity with clouds, and darkness, and horror, and, in the other, makes it the region of peace, and light, and happiness.

To conclude: whatever wears the appearance of piety in our estimation, which does not lead your hearts to God, be sure it is deception and delusion. Whatever those doctrines are, whatever those practices are, whatever that company is, which has an habitual tendency to draw off our hearts from God, and make us esteem and love Him less, be sure that that is the path of ruin and destruction. Consider every thing in religion as having this end, and this only, that of leading you to God. This should be the sum and substance of religion. If you worship God in the assemblies of his people, and feel no movement of heart to Him, be sure that it is a vain oblation and an abominable sacrifice. If you pray to God, and your hearts do not ascend to Him, be sure He will say to you with indignation at the last day, "Who hath required this at your hands?" It is the homage of the heart that He requires. This is his most acceptable sacrifice. Pray to God that He will give you a contrite heart, that He will plant his love there, that He will destroy the moral distance between you and Him, and bring you so near to Him that his perfections, and his providence, and his word, may have an abiding weight and reality in your estimation. Make it your constant prayer that the influence of creatures may be less, and the perfections and the grace of God be more and more in your esteem.

If you were to view the conduct even of the greater part of professing Christians, you would think that nothing was reality but that which related to creatures, nothing delusion but that which relates to God. But how great the mistake! If our hearts are given to God, we shall regard every thing as full of God, we shall taste his smile in all his mercies, we shall bow with submission to the afflictions we are called to suffer, reflecting that they are inflicted by Him. Death will

appear to us as the messenger of God, sent to bring us into his presence, where there is fulness of joy. Life, death, things present, and things to come, will all bear the impress and the signature of God. We shall have peace with God, the peace that passeth understanding. Pray, therefore, with the apostle, that God will enlighten your understandings, that "you may comprehend with all saints what is the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God."

XXV.

OBEDIENCE TO JESUS CHRIST, AS EXEMPLIFIED IN BAPTISM.*

JOHN, XV., 14: *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday morning, June 4, 1829, previously to the administration of the ordinance of Christian baptism.]

IT is here assumed by Jesus Christ that his disciples are his friends, and on this assumption of their friendship is founded, as a natural inference, their duty to do whatsoever He has commanded them.

I. It is a great elevation, to be a friend of Jesus Christ. To be a friend of God is noted as the highest honour of Abraham; to be a friend of Jesus Christ is not less an honour, since He and his Father are one. Mutual effects are implied in this friendship between Jesus Christ and his disciples. Mutual affection and delight in each other's society: their love to Him is the effect of his to themselves, not only as from this it derives the grand motive, but also as it indicates that everlasting love which is mentioned as the highest source of spiritual blessings. This friendship, as it exists on the Saviour's part, is far more deep and tender than any other, and far more interesting, also, as it is experienced on our part. If our love of Christ is not supreme, it is none. Such was his love that it impelled Him to give himself for his people; and, in return, every sincere believer gives himself to Christ, to serve Him as his Lord, and enjoy Him as his Friend, to be guided by his word and by his Spirit, and to dwell with Him forever.

One thing that distinguishes this friendship of Jesus Christ with believers is, that He communicates to them his mind and will. Servants are admitted to know only that small part of their master's will which concerns their duty; but to our children and our friends we delight in imparting the secrets of our hearts: and, similarly, the Saviour manifests himself to his friends as He

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield

does not to the world. He takes them into his banquet-chamber, and his banner over them is love; He assures them that the Father, as He loves his Son, loves them also; so that "truly their fellowship is with the Father and with his Son." The Spirit takes all that appertains to Christ, and reveals and applies it specifically to the loving friends of Christ; by that Spirit they are sealed unto the day of redemption, selected from the world as objects of divine love.

II. On this sacred friendship is founded an important duty: the friends of Christ are reminded by himself that He expects them to "do whatsoever He commands them." Among the things which Christ has commanded us to do, the ordinance of baptism is one, to which, on the present occasion, I shall apply the injunction, addressing, first, the spectators of this ordinance, and, secondly, the candidates for its reception.*

1. Those, among the spectators of this ordinance, who differ from our view of baptism, may be supposed to be settled in their judgment and satisfied in their practice. Charity, at least, will put this construction on their conduct. Yet they ought to inquire whether the dictates of Christ are in harmony with their opinion and their practice. They may be sincere, and yet content, in this instance, to walk in the steps of human authority; they may have attended to this question perfunctorily, or scarcely at all. Let such be reminded how unsafe this method of procedure is. It is virtually to transfer our allegiance, cease to hold the standard of God, and call others "Master." We are not to follow the footsteps of the flock farther than they follow Christ. "Do whatsoever I command you;" this is our simple, all-sufficient rule. Since we have witnessed the dreadful consequences of following human authority in the corruptions of the Church of Rome, we ought to allow nothing that is not taught by Divine revelation.

Many allege that baptism is merely an ordinance of an external nature, not a thing of serious moment, like repentance, faith, and other essential principles; but like the religious observance, or non-observance, of particular days, which St. Paul mentions as a thing left free to the judgment of individuals. This is a presumptuous and a dangerous position; it is to separate the commands of God into two classes, that of those which are weighty, and that of those which are unimportant. We must apply to this case the apostle's argument respecting the decalogue. All the ten commandments, it may be alleged, were not of equal weight; yet the apostle reasons that He who said, "Thou shalt not steal," is the same who said also, "Thou shalt not kill," and that, whether a man kill another, or only steal from him, he

* On a former baptismal occasion, at which I was present, Mr. Hall had entered into a most acute argumentative defence of baptism, as administered in his own denomination. It was founded on the words, "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him," Col., ii., 12. It was, as may well be supposed, a masterpiece of special pleading, an adequate reply to which would have required no ordinary powers.—GRINFIELD.

is equally guilty before God as a transgressor of the divine law; "for whosoever shall offend in one point is guilty of all." It is the authority of the Divine Lawgiver that is the nexus of obligation; and, therefore, I affirm, such a position as that to which I have adverted is dangerous, because such a method of procedure strikes high, and tends to invalidate all authority, all obligation. Though multitudes who neglect our mode of baptism are, I doubt not, sanctified and saved, yet, as a general rule, it is not safe to neglect that which you suspect to be right. "Happy is he who condemns not himself in that which he allows." If those who differ can say that, after due examination of the question, they conclude that they are right in differing, such may enjoy great satisfaction and benefit in their own practice. But this earnest inquiry into the mind of Christ is too often disregarded. We desire only that you would search the Scriptures, and follow them whithersoever they conduct you.

Baptism, it has been often said, is not a saving ordinance. It is not; and we, of all people, can best repel this objection, for we believe that this right belongs to such only as are saved, only to true believers, of whom we read that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as are saved."—Acts, ii., ult. How others can escape from this objection, I must leave themselves to explain; how they can affirm that they do not consider baptism essential to salvation. There are few things essential to salvation: all depends on the grace of God flowing into the soul; and a main point is, that we desire to know the will of God. Our Saviour says, "If a man keep my sayings, he shall never taste of death." We must be ready to do whatever Christ commands. Let me simply request all who have any doubts respecting the true mode of baptism, to read for themselves: the whole question lies in a nutshell; and if they find the evidence preponderate on our side, it is dangerous to refuse our practice; if otherwise, they may rest satisfied in their own. In this advice there is nothing that can offend any honest mind.

2. With respect to those who are candidates for this holy ordinance, it only remains for them, regardless of the censures of a misjudging world, to do whatever Christ has required, being now solemnly admitted into the school of Christ, with humility to press forward. Yours is as yet a very scantling of that knowledge and that grace which you may hope to attain. You have not as yet given proof of your steadfastness, your care to keep your garments pure; you are now only putting on Christ. Let those who see you, see Christ—a living, imbodied exhibition of the Spirit of Christ! Go forth into an evil world as those who are clothed with Christ! From his elevation on the throne of his glory He issues the command and the promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life!" Keep his command, and you shall inherit his promise. Then you shall enter into the eternal city, and go out thence no more forever.

With this prospect, this joy set before him, He, as your example, endured the cross, despising the shame. Go forth, therefore, "without the camp, bearing his reproach." The great deciding day is near; all obscurity will ere long be lost in light, and the Judge will proclaim, "These are they who kept my words, and followed the Lamb whithersoever He went before them."

XXVI.

PRESENT ADVANTAGES OF PIETY.*

PROVERBS, iii., 17: *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, April 20th, 1828. Half-yearly address to young persons.]

THESE words, as you are probably aware, are put by Solomon into the mouth of Divine wisdom, which is another name for religion. They are designed to counteract a prejudice which has often prevailed, and especially in the minds of the young, that religion is connected with melancholy, and calls upon us to bid adieu to all the innocent and natural enjoyments of life. In consequence of this prejudice, many, and especially young persons, have often resolved to put off the thoughts of religion to a future period, as if it became rather the gravity of age than the vivacity of youth; and thus they have been tempted to reckon upon the uncertain continuance of life, until, perhaps, all opportunities of attending to religious concerns were gone by. It is very important that this delusion should be exploded, and that it should be made clear by the decision of experience, the testimony of all the wisest and best of men, that religion's "ways are the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." This, indeed, has been the testimony even of those who have endured the greatest sufferings in the cause of religion: they found that its comforts were more than a compensation for all their afflictions.

Two chief remarks may be premised in entering on this subject: first, that the case of those who suffer persecution for the sake of religion should be excluded from the present view, which relates to the ordinary state and circumstances of piety in this world. The case of persecution bears a very small proportion to the seasons of security and tranquillity which are afforded to religious persons, especially in later times; and yet, when persecution does occur, God has been found to bestow such consolations on his afflicted servants as they had never, perhaps, experienced before; such as completely verified the assertion of the text, even in the circumstances most unfavourable to the experience of "pleasantness and peace."

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

Secondly, let it be remembered that, in order to contemplate the tendency of any principle, we must view it as operating in its mature, and vigorous, and perfect state. This is the way in which we should try any law of nature; and thus we should contemplate piety as it exists in the most exemplary characters, if we would fairly examine its tendency to produce happiness: those whose piety is of a feeble and a doubtful kind may not be qualified as yet either to experience or to exhibit the real tendency of their own principles; as they advance, the darkness that attended their earlier course will gradually disappear, and their path will shine more and more unto the perfect day.

The point before us is the influence of religion on the happiness of its possessor during the present life. There are two respects in which we may view this subject: first, as religion has an influence on those other objects which are commonly supposed to constitute a principal part of human felicity; and then as it has an interior influence on the mind of its possessor, independently of outward circumstances.

I. In the first place, we are to consider the influence of religion on those objects which are supposed to be most contributory to the present happiness of mankind. Of these there are chiefly three: the prolongation of life, the possession of reputation, and the acquisition of property. With respect to each of these, religion will be found to have a favourable influence on our present happiness.

1. With respect to the prolongation of life. In the description of wisdom, from which the text is taken, she is represented as having "length of days in her right hand:" and in another place the wisest of men assures us that "the fear of the Lord prolongeth days." The continuance of life is to be considered, on various accounts, a blessing; as life is the foundation of all other blessings, and essential to their enjoyment; as its prolongation extends the sphere of usefulness, and prolongs the only opportunity which we can have of serving God on earth.

Piety inspires that moderation in all things, which is equally favourable to the faculties of the body and the mind; it tempers the passions of youth when most in need of restraint by subjecting the body to the mind, the appetites to the control of reason, and reason itself to the control of God. Piety exerts a tranquillizing influence on all our emotions; it guards us alike from the extremes of irritation and sorrow on the one hand, or of intoxicating pleasure on the other; teaching us to "rejoice as if we rejoiced not, and to weep as if we wept not, because the fashion of this world passeth away." Pride and revenge have hurried thousands to the grave; but piety represses these, and in their place teaches meekness and forgiveness.

Involved in the prolongation of life is the preservation of health. Health is impaired or preserved by the same causes as life. Of wisdom's influence it is said, "it shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones." A good man will attend to the care of health, as of a talent intrusted to him: he will never wantonly, or without some extraordinary occasion, neglect its preservation, but will husband it for

the service of God, and that of his generation. Many persons, after their conversion, have greatly improved their health, which had been before impaired by those vicious excesses which war alike against the body and the soul.

2. Religion favours the possession of reputation. "A good name is more precious than ointment," says Solomon; and he represents "honour" in wisdom's left hand, as "length of days" was in her right. Though reputation ought not to be made an object of primary desire and pursuit, yet it is to be valued in its just degree: the esteem of excellent persons tends to confirm and animate us in a virtuous course; and when we might be in danger of sinking under a distrust of our attainments, the commendation of the wise and good may sustain our own desponding estimate of our moral qualities: besides which, reputation enlarges the opportunities of usefulness to others. But piety promotes esteem: a good man commonly lives down at last the enmity which his virtues had at first excited. There is a power in good men that disarms hostility: "who is he that will harm you," says Peter, "if ye be followers of good?" "Demetrius," says John, "has a good report of all men, and of the truth itself." "He that in these things serveth Christ," says Paul, "is acceptable to God, and approved of men." And, once more,

3. With regard to the acquisition of property: to say that extraordinary opulence is likely in general to be accumulated by the man of piety, would perhaps be wrong. In general, it is to be feared, the acquisition of great riches is accompanied rather by the neglect of religious duties, by an excessive immersion in worldly affairs, or by a degree of artifice in the pursuit of the objects of avarice. But to the attainment of moderate wealth, we maintain that piety is favourable, inasmuch as it promotes habits of regularity and industry, inspires a proper desire to excel in our calling, and recommends us by a character of integrity. A moderate zeal for the acquirement of property, with a view to useful or necessary ends, is not condemned, either by the voice of reason, or by the word of God. Wisdom is portrayed as "having in her left hand riches" as well as honour."

These advantages to our temporal happines will be found, though not universally, yet usually, to walk in the train of religion.

II. We now proceed to those present effects of religion which are of an interior nature, which belong to the state of the mind, and which are independent of outward circumstances. Though we profess, on this occasion, to set aside an immediate view of the future happiness promised to religion in another state of being, yet we cannot set aside the expectation of that happiness; for this would be to set aside the very subject of our inquiry, religion itself; the expectation of a future state, and a happiness beyond this life, being essential to the existence of religion. All the servants of God have ever expected blessings in another world, and have been affected in a suitable manner by such expectation. And we speak of the ordinary effects of religion on its possessors; though they may be experienced in an ex-

traordinary degree on particular occasions, and at certain seasons. Such effects are the following:

1. Every good man lives in the belief and remembrance of God, as that great Being who is, and who is fitted by his infinite perfections to be, the Governor of all things. This is the thought most familiar to the mind of every religious person: and what can be so calculated to calm the mind, amid all agitations? to give satisfaction, amid the seeming inequality of providence, amid the wildness and strangeness, the disorders and distresses, of the present scene? What so suited to inspire confidence and peace, as the conviction that Jehovah reigns; that there exists at the head of the universe a Being infinitely wise, good, and mighty; that there is an Eternal Mind at the helm of the world, who, through the tempests of time, conducts all things to the proper haven; and says to the waves, in the height of their commotion, "Hitherto shall ye come, and no farther?"

2. Good men believe that they are in a state of harmony with this Greatest and Best of beings. Can it be indifferent to any man whether he is in a state of amity or enmity with such a Being; a Being who is all activity and energy; who sees, and commands, and fills all things? The suspicion of his hostility to us must be a cause of the deepest disquietude; but the conviction of his friendship must be unspeakably tranquillizing to the heart; and this is the effect and reward of piety.

3. The pious man, in every season of trouble, has recourse to this Divine and Almighty Friend. To cry for help to God is the dictate of nature, and it is confirmed by the word of God. The Christian goes to the throne of grace, and casts his care on Him who has declared that He careth for him: he prays, and he believes that his prayer ascends to a God who hears and answers prayer. Is not this a support and consolation? to deal with God as with a Father who invites us to himself at all times? to stay on his promises, and be at peace? I would appeal, for the answer, to every one here that has used this tried resource.

4. If we consider what are the most essential elements of piety, we shall find them favourable to happiness. These may be stated as adoration and benevolence; the former having respect to the Divine Being, the latter extending to our fellow-creatures. What is adoration but the contemplation of the infinite fulness and glory of God; a mixture of veneration and love towards that Being who alone is qualified to be our eternal, as well as our satisfying portion? The heavenly state itself can present nothing higher than this; and the sacred writers, in referring to it, can say nothing more exalted than these words, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!" It is in the nature of man to love sublimity: but this sentiment can only find its proper element in piety: there alone can perfect grandeur dwell!

With regard to benevolence and love, we read that to "dwell in love is to dwell in God;" it is to make the nearest approach to the Divine felicity and to the Divine image. Hatred makes us wretched;

it is for the most part baffled in its purposes, overruled by causes beyond our control: but love can never be entirely disappointed, as it is in affinity with the purposes of the Best of beings.

5. Piety tranquillizes us, as it teaches us to believe in a heavenly state. Whether there is a heaven or not (a point which we need not decide for our present purpose, though we have sufficient evidence that there is), the happy belief in such a state remains unchanged to the pious man. He believes that time bears him on to an eternity of bliss; that he is rich in the reversion of a glorious futurity, the meanest portion of which, as reserved for the meanest among the servants of God, far surpasses all that is coveted here. He rejoices in the hope of the glory of God; and this hope, which is always steadfast, at times amounts to a rapturous assurance, in moments when eternity seems to be at hand; when faith almost rises into vision; and the believer can say, with a tone of triumph, "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ!" "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God!"

These are sentiments in which eminent saints have lived and died: some of them may have been known to us, and thousands more are on record. And, though Christians are often in trouble like others, the Spirit of promise only is required to produce in their souls these joys to a degree which humanity itself cannot sustain; and thus to overwhelm us with an "exceeding weight of glory!"

Have done with all unjust suspicion as to the happiness of religion! Oh, taste and see! Religion will make you happy here; but, above all, it will prepare you to be happy with God hereafter. It will render you useful, respected, and perhaps even illustrious, on earth; and it will certainly render you glorious in the presence of God. The neglect of religion must prove essentially, irreparably, and eternally calamitous: there can be no peace without God: He is the God of peace; and Jesus Christ is the only way to Him. "There is no peace to the wicked." God says it, and it must stand. An infinite will is opposed to their welfare.

Let us, therefore, now lay hold on the Divine Being, by prayer, by looking to the cross of Christ, by walking under the conduct of his Spirit; walking humbly with God here below, until we reach the eternal temple, and go out thence no more. These are the true sayings of God: He calls us by his Son to be justified, sanctified, and glorified with himself forever!

XXVII.

DUTY OF BELIEVERS TO MAINTAIN GOOD WORKS.*

TITUS, iii., 8: *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God be careful to maintain good works. These things are good, and profitable unto men.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, Nov. 5, 1829, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

THE Apostle Paul is conspicuous, among the sacred writers, as the great champion of Divine grace; he expatiates, beyond the rest, on the doctrines that illustrate the freeness of the gospel salvation; to him we resort for argument whenever we would insist on Christ crucified as the ground of our justification; he excludes all ideas of merit in the creature, and exhibits the Divine Redeemer as the only propitiation for our sins.

This great doctrine is laid down in the words immediately connected with those of the text; in which he affirms that, "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be," according to the promise, "made heirs of eternal life." A clearer, fuller account of gratuitous redemption, combined with the work of the Holy Spirit, is not to be found in the Scriptures. Yet from this he instantly proceeds, in the text, to inculcate the ministerial duty of constantly recommending good works and a holy life. This is a sufficient answer to those who think it enough if we exhibit, in our preaching, the great doctrines of the gospel, while we may leave the particular duties of Christian obedience to follow of their own accord. Those who form their ministry, or who form their taste as hearers, on this supposition, differ from the judgment of the Apostle Paul.

Christians are here described as "those who have believed in God." This more particularly refers to Gentile converts, who had no faith before they became acquainted with the gospel; for all just ideas of God and of duty are owing to Jesus Christ; it is through Him that we arrive at the character of God; we believe in the Father only through the Son; we ascend to the only true God by Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

We are now to observe what it is which those who minister the gospel to others are here required to "affirm constantly;"

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

namely, this, "that those who have believed in God be careful to maintain good works." Ministers, it is implied, ought to make this object a matter of forethought; they must not leave it to chance, or regard it as a thing of course; it must be "constantly affirmed."

I. It is impossible, on this occasion, to go over all the various departments of "good works;" a few specimens only can be mentioned.

Some have supposed that the apostle meant no more than this: that Christians, like others, were to engage in the various callings of worldly business; just as he elsewhere exhorts them to be "not slothful in business." This is far from being the only, or the principal meaning of his advice; yet this is essential, in its place, to our doing the will of God. To suppose that the pursuit of his worldly calling is unworthy of a spiritual person is an utter delusion, contradicted expressly by the precepts and example of St. Paul, who, even when he was called to be an apostle, and separated to the gospel of God, still continued at times his occupation of a tent-maker; and who charges his brethren to be diligent in the labours of their calling, that they may have to give to those that need; adding that, "if any would not work, neither should they eat." Widows he represents as not the objects of charitable support to the Church, but first to their own relations; "let them relieve their widows, and let not the Church be charged;" on the principle that, "if any provide not for his own, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;" natural instinct would lead an infidel, a heathen, to care for his family.

Some have presumed, on the expectation of the Redeemer's second advent being near, to neglect their temporal affairs. But even if we suppose his advent near, still the precepts of Scripture retain their force, and are not to be interpreted anew by the prophecies. The interpretation of prophecy must always remain too uncertain to become a rule of life. Christians are advised by the apostle to abide in their stations and callings; advice surely quite as applicable to Christians in the present age as it was in his. Not only ought Christians to be diligent in ordinary duties, but also to avoid the besetting temptation of their callings. This is to glorify God on earth, and to afford bright examples of godliness. Not only must we do good, but avoid evil. Then shall we let our light shine before men, instead of burying it in solitude.

2. We should be careful, as "those who have believed in God," to maintain good works of benevolence to others. "Pure religion," says James, "is to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction." Tabitha is commemorated as having been "full of good works and alms-deeds;" and, at her death, the widows, who had lost in her their sympathizing friend, while they wept over her, showed the coats and garments which she had made. A deaconess was not to be appointed in the primitive

churches until she had given evidence of her devotedness to every good work; as one who had lodged strangers, washed the saints' feet, relieved the afflicted. He who indulges his love of wealth, while he withholds his aid from those that suffer by poverty, and "hides himself from his own flesh," acts an unnatural as well as an unchristian part. Christians are taught to "bear one another's burdens, and by love to serve one another;" they are expected not merely to equal others, but to excel in deeds of charity, that the reproachful question may not be applied, "What do ye more than others?" Jesus Christ appeared pre-eminently in this character, so that of Him nothing more characteristic could be said than that "He went about doing good." It is the character of Christian love, that it attends to the infirmities and distresses of others; an eminent Christian will always be eminent in these evidences of genuine charity. It is the effect of spirituality to make the heart tender and generous, feelingly awake to the calls of philanthropy.

Among such calls the cause of Christian missions holds a distinguished place; its claim is imperative on Christians; "for," as the apostle argues, "how shall they believe unless they hear? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" and how shall they be sent without liberal support from ourselves? We are not to depend on Providence for the support of the missionary cause, without zealous exertions on our own part; this would argue an utter forgetfulness of the established order of things, and a contempt of the will of God. No such expectation is warranted by his word; we are expected to use the appointed means; and certainly no nobler work can be proposed than that of sending the healing balm of salvation to the perishing tribes of mankind. To this great object we should all contribute according to our various powers; mindful of the apostolic admonition, "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."

3. Another class of good works, which we should cultivate, is that of those which diffuse happiness by diminishing contention. "Blessed," says our Lord, "are the peace-makers;" we are charged not to return "evil for evil, or railing for railing;" we are to remember that "a soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up strife;" we are to rise superior to injurious treatment, imitating the example of Jesus Christ, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again." Every one who, though he hold no station of authority, aims to allay discord and preserve peace, may serve Jesus Christ, and obtain his promised reward. Every individual has his own little circle of influence, in which he diffuses either benefit or bane around. Every word is a seed of good or evil. If we are content to do good in a minute way, never can we want opportunities. We are continually proving a savour to others, either of life or of death. How many emana-

tions of life would the apostle's example, as well as his preaching, diffuse! What gentle, benign influences would accompany his presence and his converse, wherever he went! He was, indeed, an exalted minister of the Lord: but every member of the Church has his own vocation and ministry to fulfil; poverty is no obstruction; Christians are to operate as a salt that imparts its savour in social life. In short, it is impossible to comprehend the numberless ways in which we may be doing good at all times, if we lend ourselves to this as our constant end and aim.

II. In conclusion, we may briefly advert to some uses and benefits resulting from good works.

1. These works, though they are of no avail to save us as sinners before God, are yet good, as works of those who are created anew in Jesus Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit, for their performance. No one can have any real evidence of his being in Christ but that which arises from works of this character; these are the good fruits of the good tree. If we say that we know God, that we believe in Jesus Christ, and yet live the same sensual and selfish lives as before, we lie, and do not the truth, which we profess to know and believe. On the other hand, what a satisfaction to compare what we are with what we once were, in purity, temperance, meekness, charity; and to be able, on such a comparison, to say, with Paul, "By the grace of God, I am what I am!" There are seasons of peculiar evidence in the experience of believers, when the Comforter bears witness with their spirit that they are the adopted children of God; but the fruits of the Spirit, the effects of the gospel on our conduct, the works of faith, the labours of love, these are the only evidences that are with us at all times.

2. Such works are the declared end of our Christian profession. We are "created in Jesus Christ unto good works." How awful our state, if we fall short of that obedience which is the end of our being, the end of our new creation! "I have chosen you," said Jesus Christ, "and ordained you, that ye should bring forth fruit!" otherwise we are only cumberers of the ground, ordained to be cut down! The end of the Christian profession is, that we should serve God here and forever; consequently, if we neglect this end, we are false professors; we have no right to be called Christians.

3. According to the character of our works, we are taught to expect the degrees of glory. Though the reward is of grace, it is proportioned to the degrees of holiness and usefulness which its inheritors attained. This is the doctrine of the New Testament. "He that soweth sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully," shall reap their respective and correspondent rewards. The servant who turned his trust to a tenfold improvement is rewarded with a tenfold authority. The apostles of the Lamb inherit the highest crown. To them He "appoints a kingdom, that they shall sit on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel."

4. These works are not only "good," in respect to those who do them, but also "profitable to men." They are creditable to the cause of piety. Men will be edified by your example; you will render your religious profession amiable and attractive; conciliate even enemies; while your actions appeal to the conscience and the heart. When a heavenly life attends a heavenly doctrine, it is then marvellous in the eyes of men. This will produce an impression which no fine theory, no sublime doctrine, could otherwise effect. How would this shame away infidelity, and prove Christianity to be an emanation from heaven! Christians should regard themselves as persons consigned for God; we cannot alienate ourselves from the service of God without robbing Him of his own; and "will a man rob God?" Let us bear it in our minds, that we are not our own, but God's; that "none of us lives to himself, or dies to himself, but that we live to the Lord, and die to the Lord! that, living or dying, we are the Lord's!"

XXVIII.

CITIZENSHIP AND CONDUCT OF CHRISTIANS.*

PHILIPPIANS, iii., 20: *Our conversation is in heaven.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, March 2, 1828.]

THE Apostle Paul, in writing to the various churches among which he had laboured, often appeals to the purity of his own example: he was able to remind them "how holily, and righteously, and piously, he had behaved himself among them." And he found this the more necessary, from the early corruption of manners which crept in among the professors of Christianity: even in that age of exalted piety, "many walked" as the real enemies, while they called themselves the friends, of Christ. We should not take offence at the gospel on account of false professors mingling with the sincere, since it was the same in the purest age of the Church. Let none question the Divine origin and holy tendency of the gospel because some abuse it; it is enough that every genuine Christian purifies himself even as his Master is pure; "for we," says the apostle, "are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." And while many, calling themselves Christians, walk as enemies of Christ, "our conversation is in heaven."

In the text we have a description either of the privilege, or of the duty of real Christians. The word rendered "conversation" is equally applicable to either sense: it may denote both a state of citizenship, the condition of those who enjoy certain privileges and immu-

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

nities, and also a course of life, a manner of behaviour, a spirit and character formed by such a condition, and suitable to those who enjoy such a citizenship. We shall consider the text in both these respects; and,

I. As it expresses the privilege of all real Christians. They are called to be citizens of heaven. The heavenly state is often represented in the Scriptures under the notion of a city. Thus the apostle says of those who died "in faith," that they "looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" and "here," says he, "we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come;" "for God," he adds, "hath provided for us a city." In the Apocalypse we have a large description of the heavenly state as "the holy city—the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." Jerusalem, as the seat of worship and centre of the Jewish nation, was eminently a type of the celestial city; it is thus often mentioned in the Psalms, as, "the Lord hath desired Zion for his habitation, saying, this shall be my rest forever." In the same manner the apostle says, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Sarah and Hagar are mentioned by the apostle as typical of the two seeds, the legal and the evangelical; and Sarah is compared to Jerusalem which is from above, the mother or metropolis of us all; "for we, brethren, are the children of the free woman." All who become real Christians are accessions to the heavenly city, training up for the full enjoyment of its privileges. No sooner does a person become truly religious, than he obtains a right and title to heaven; "he is begotten again to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." All true Christians form one society, are incorporated into one city, acknowledge one King. They are children of hope and of promise; that hope of heaven which is the great hope, that promise of heaven which is the great promise of the gospel.

Christians have a much nearer and more important relation to heaven than to earth. With earth, although they are at present its inhabitants, they are connected by the body; with heaven, by the soul: the former is merely a transient, the latter an everlasting connexion: the former is but as a shadow, the latter the real substance: here they have but a dissoluble tent, there "a house eternal in the heavens." In proportion as they realize their heavenly calling, they lose sight of the distinctions of time, those of riches or poverty, health or sickness, prosperity or affliction, life or death; the changeable colours of this mortal scene!

II. We may regard the words as descriptive of a course of life suited to those who possess such a relation.* Every citizen of heaven

* In this sense the word is used when the apostle says, "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel" (Phil., i., 27).—GRINFIELD.

has a part to act, a character to sustain, different from the men of this world. Something more pure and elevated may be expected from such a person, than from those who "mind earthly things." Taken in this sense, the word "conversation" may be viewed in three respects.

1. It is a heavenly call by which we become Christians at first. When our Saviour spoke of a man being born again, if he is to enter heaven, the word He used may be equally rendered, "born from above." The sons of God are born not of blood, nor the will of man, but of God; they have a heavenly descent. They are placed in a new relation to the best of Beings—they are made associates of angels: a spark, kindled at the great Fountain of Light, inflames their souls. And as their new nature springs from heaven, so it tends to heaven.

2. All the exercises of grace are preparations for heaven. The graces of the Holy Spirit have their end in the heavenly state. Faith, hope, and love—those cardinal virtues of the Church on earth—have their faces set Zion-ward, and aspire to heaven as their element and home. Faith looks at things unseen and eternal: "I give unto My sheep eternal life;" and this is the grand attraction of the gospel. Faith, in the ancient believers, though it had a subordinate respect to temporal promises of an earthly Canaan, yet always looked beyond these to its ultimate object; and all those saints "died in faith" of a better country, and were conscious that they had not received the grand promise. And hope—is its object of a temporal nature? no, it is the hope of glory! The Christian, who realizes this hope, finds it to be an "anchor of his soul, sure and steadfast, and cast within the veil" of eternity: it supports and animates him amid his trials. "We are saved by hope," says the apostle: "Jesus Christ, He is our hope." Love, also, the grace whose dignity is such that it will survive every other, will expatiate in heaven as in its proper field: when every obstacle is removed, when faith is lost in sight, and hope in enjoyment, love will reign in its perfection; the beatific vision is accompanied by the fire of love! Other virtues of the saints, as patience, humility, equanimity under every trial, all are preparations of the soul for heaven; as the Divine Forerunner said, "Where I am, there shall also My servants be." They tread the path of Him who was made perfect through sufferings. "If we sow to the Spirit, we shall reap life eternal." It is this principle that sustains the Christian, and strengthens his hands and knees when weak and weary. "Behold, my reward is with me." The graces that are most spiritual and heavenly in their nature, that flourish in the shade, and court not the eye of man, have most respect to heaven; they are watered by the dews that descend from the everlasting hills!

3. Lastly, the Christian's conversation is in heaven, as his actions, no less than the emotions of his spirit, are regulated by a regard to eternal felicity.

(1.) Jesus Christ, as He declared, will "give to every man according to his works; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life."—(Rom., ii.) The actions of Christians are like a series of steps, by which they as-

cend nearer and nearer to God and heaven. In all they do, they aim to lay up for themselves treasure in heaven; they make their conduct at once the preparation for, and the matter of, their future reward. Eternity is the soil of the Spirit, in which they sow. If their conduct is such as they believe to be consistent with the reward of Christ and heaven, then, whatever others may judge, this is enough for them; thus they "lay up for themselves a good foundation, that they may lay hold on eternal life;" thus they "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," if, "by any means, they may attain the rusurrection" to a glorious immortality! And, like the apostle, they desire to combine a holy retrospect with the happy prospect; "I have fought the good fight; there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." Nor is this hope of an unworthy or mercenary nature, in having such a respect unto the reward. We are so constituted that hope we must have, as the spring of action, hope of good and fear of evil; none can lift up himself above such a motive. And what a dignified and elevated hope is this of heaven! the hope of a state where no sin, no curse exists; where we recover the image, and behold the glory, of God, and forever enjoy the presence of the Best of beings! "Every one that hath this hope will purify himself as He is pure," and make it his great aim in life to become "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

(2.) With action we must connect meditation on the heavenly world: we must hold communion with it, study the nature of its felicity as painted in the word of God; and, in this view, we may derive much light and aid from that which is in other respects the darkest portion of that word, the visions of John, in which we meet with bright vistas into the state of glory. If our thoughts are often making excursions into the unseen world, if we dwell in the suburbs of eternity, if we thus, without hyperbole, have "our conversation in heaven," we shall grow in grace and ripen for glory. To such as thus wait for Him, God gives realizing foretastes of heaven, like the grapes of Eschol in the midst of their pilgrimage through the wilderness; He consigns and seals them for eternal glory!

By way of a brief improvement, let me remind you, my brethren, that, if we would have an entrance into heaven, our conversation must be there. We may not make our belly our god, nor our shame our glory, and yet we may be destitute of the Christian character, and "mind earthly things." If you are living for this world, you are not for heaven: you are yielding eternity for trifles, like the young man who, for the sake of his possessions, turned his back on all the glories of the gospel! Not that the want of worldly things is any exemption from such a character. It matters not what we are in circumstances, but where we lay our treasure, what we aim at. Ask yourself often at the close of a day, "Have I this day had my conversation in heaven? have I lived for eternity and God? I am not my own, I am his; I am bought with the blood of Christ, and not my own!" So will you

spend every day for heaven; so, when your end comes, you will be calm and prepared for it. Oh, what an inheritance have they who wait for Christ! heaven is theirs, God is theirs, height and depth, life and death, all things are theirs! Let us, my brethren, be of this number: to us let it be Christ to live, and then to die will be our unspeakable gain!

XXIX.

GOSPEL CONDUCT.*

PHILIPPIANS, i., 27: *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, September 11th, 1828.]

THE members of the Church at Philippi enjoyed the apostle's esteem and friendship in a very eminent degree. He loved them for their moral excellences. On account of their ardent piety, they attained to a high rank among the Christians of those times. Yet he addresses to *them* the word of exhortation, and affectionately urges them to strive after higher attainments, and to make greater advances in the divine life. As they had manifested their regard for him by assisting liberally to provide for his wants, he might justly love them in return. But the character of the apostle forbids the supposition that this was the *only* motive. We have more reason to suppose that his regard for them was founded in their exemplary piety, devoted attachment to the Saviour's cause, and their consistent walk and conversation.

I. There is a certain description of conduct worthy a profession of the gospel, and which all Christians ought to maintain.

We invariably find principle and conduct closely connected; a real Christian will, therefore, maintain a course of conduct which accords with the Divine principles of the Christian religion. There is throughout the gospel a practical tendency which leads its adherents to live in a manner worthy of it. This conduct includes several leading things, some of which we will particularize.

1. *The gospel unfolds the perfections of a glorious Being, and exhibits a pattern in the person of Jesus Christ.* A conversation worthy the gospel will therefore be distinguished for *purity*. Not such purity as was inculcated by the philosophers who lived in the earlier ages of the Christian era; then whole cities were given up to lust and idolatry, and obscene vices formed an element of their religion. Christians openly condemned these practices: in private life they abhorred them. And could the secret workings of their inmost souls have been disclosed, it would have been seen that they maintained a continued struggle with the corruptions of the flesh.

* Partly as reported in the Evangelist, and partly from the notes of John Greene, Esq.

This purity in action, speech, and thought, is so becoming a professor of the Christian religion, that the most casual observer perceives it. It is better, therefore, not to name Jesus Christ, than to profess to love Him, and to disgrace that profession by not maintaining this purity.

2. *Integrity, faithfulness, and punctuality in all our engagements are important elements of this conduct.* Christians are supposed by their profession to be free from the love of the world as a *ruling* principle. But why? Because they are seeking *a better country.* Hence many motives to the indulgence of dishonest practices are powerless in their case. The God whom they revere, and love, and worship, is a *faithful* God. Dishonesty as a means of unlawful gain is contrary to these principles. Christians who maintain a conversation becoming the gospel have no temptations to injustice, for they have this world as though "they possessed it not." The word of a sincere Christian is to him as solemn as his oath, and as sacred as his bond. The men of the world attach a high value to these virtues. The gospel enjoins them, and tends to promote their growth. Hence they form very essential parts of a consistent profession of religion.

3. *A spirit of benevolence is another important part of this deportment.* The gospel is a perfect system of benevolence. *God is love,* and when his word takes effectual hold of the heart, it invariably expands every affection, and directs them to proper objects. A Christian imbibes the Spirit of God. His soul is warmed by its influence, and every motion and faculty is sustained by its Divine energy. He becomes *like* his heavenly Father. It is as natural for a Christian to do good, as it is for the sun to send forth heat and light.

Hence malice and guile are extinguished in the Christian's bosom. Ambition and inordinate self-love, which harden the heart, have no abiding within him.

4. *Continued zeal for God's glory is another element of this deportment.* The glory of God consists in the display of his perfections in giving a practical manifestation of the principles of that revelation which makes them known to us. And closely connected with this object is the promotion of the welfare of mankind in general. The Christian is, therefore, a steady adherent to the Saviour's cause. He is zealous and devout in an attendance on Divine worship—he is active in supporting those institutions which tend to diffuse throughout the world the knowledge of the Saviour's name.

Having thus adverted to the chief elements of the conversation recommended in the text, we proceed to notice,

II. The reasons in which it is founded.

1. *Such conduct is calculated to please God.* Are the subjects of an earthly monarch anxious to please their sovereign? How much more shall the Christian be anxious to please God, who is *the King of kings, and Lord of lords?* Are children desirous of pleasing their earthly parents? Much more shall the Christian strive to do the will of his Father who is in heaven. Just as an evil life is a stench in his nostrils, so a virtuous and consistent life is like a sweet-smelling savour, both fragrant and pleasant.

2. *It tends to promote the grand end of our conversion.* The apostle states that the Christian is not his own, and he is exhorted on that ground *to glorify God with his body and spirit, which are his.* To glorify God is, therefore, the end of conversion. Consistent conduct tends to silence the mockery of foolish men. It shows the power of their principles, and proves the reality of their attachment to them.

Their own souls are not only benefited, but there is a visible harmony between profession and conduct. The recollection of a consistent life will cheer them in the hour of distress, and support them in the article of death. And do not the ungodly wish for this tranquillity in sorrow and death? Do they not desire the fortitude and heroism which a good man displays in these trying and eventful circumstances? When they are smitten by Providence, do they not send for him, that the darkness which surrounds them may be cheered by the holy radiance of his religion? What an homage to piety—what a proof of the value of the gospel, and of a conversation worthy its profession! What a stimulus to cultivate a holy life! "*Let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" Religion makes men better husbands, better fathers, better children, better servants, better neighbours. None but those who are blind to all causes of moral good can deny that the religion of the gospel cometh from the *Father of lights.*

It may be farther stated in proof of what has been advanced, that inconsistent conduct on the part of professors of religion is one of the causes most prolific of infidelity in the world. Let this consideration put Christians on their guard, and awaken them to a just sense of the importance of the duty here enjoined.

3. *It will afford great satisfaction to the Church.* The Church is never so happy and prosperous as when its members are walking in the truth. Those who wish to make any return for what they owe to Christ—who wish to cheer the heart of their pastor—who wish to contribute to the peace of Zion, will obey the precept. It will diffuse a spirit of harmony and love, and excite the zeal, and stir up the graces of those with whom we are united in Christian fellowship.

This precept was with regard to the final salvation of the Christian converts; it depended upon their "continuance" in these commands. They were *to be diligent, to be found of him in peace;* to do which, they were to continue faithful unto death. Too many Christians are apt to look back upon their conversion as a ground of comfort; but the Scriptures give us no promises but what are connected with perseverance to death. If, after having begun in the Spirit, ye end in death—if you conform to the spirit of the world, you know nothing of the spirit of Christianity; you have the name without the spirit; ye are weighed in the balances, and found wanting. It is by consistency only we can allure others to the profession and dignity of the Christian character; for it rests upon this, "*that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your heavenly Father.*" These principles, my brethren, followed out, will carry us to great heights and degrees in Chris-

tian virtue; we shall not ask how little of it we may have, but does such a spirit, and such a course of conduct, most become the gospel of Christ? With these maxims in our mouths and in our hearts, we shall be aiming to have as much of it as we can, and be continually dissatisfied with ourselves if we are not copying some new lineaments of the features of Jesus Christ. This, the apostle says, would be a source of unspeakable satisfaction to Him. Their union with each other, and their steadfast adherence to the cause of Christ, was one part of this exemplary course. He exhorted them to be nothing terrified by their adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition. Having Jesus Christ with the Father as an advocate, what was there to terrify them? They knew He was at the head of all principalities and powers. That Christian, my brethren, who views Jesus Christ as the Lord of men, of angels, and of glory, how firm and undaunted may he look around him, and consider kings and princes but as common dust; for they must submit themselves to his authority, or perish! This resolute adherence to Christ firmly showed that they had an invisible protector; that those potsherds of the earth must be destroyed: "*Wo to him who striveth with his Maker!*" This was an evident token of perdition to their enemies, but of salvation to themselves. It was a foretaste of their future inheritance; *for unto you* (the apostle says) it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for his sake. Instead of their repining at the cross of Christ, they were to consider it a privilege which God had put on them—it was a gift on behalf of Christ; they rejoiced that they were thought worthy to suffer for Him. Why this unutterable kind of sentiment and feeling, my brethren? Because they believed the friendship of Jesus Christ, and they knew that He had solemnly declared, "*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.*" They knew that, though all the faithful followers of Jesus Christ would be crowned, yet a brighter crown was reserved for them; they knew that they should reign with Him with peculiar honour and glory. They considered the sufferings of the Church on earth as an earnest of their elevation in heaven; that the degree in which they sunk in one, was to be their exaltation in the other. Can we have this spirit if we do not deny the world? or, if we do not suffer for his sake, how can we be companions of them that suffered? On the whole, my brethren: Oh, the great importance of having these views in life, and these hopes in death, which the apostle sets before us! As we must all die, and God has laid no other foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ, let us often ask ourselves whether the end of our life is to glorify God, and whether we have any well-founded hope, if we were now to die, we should be with the Lord. The inquiry is all-important, "*Is your conversation such as becometh the gospel of Christ?*"

XXX.

THE BEATITUDE OF MOURNERS.*

MATTHEW, v., 4 : *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, June 22, 1828.]

THE object for which Christ came was to bless mankind by "turning away every one from his iniquities." He began his ministry by pointing out the object itself—blessedness—and the way of attaining it. He described those dispositions and principles which must be formed in the heart, to prepare us for true happiness, and He departed from the world in the act of blessing his followers.

In the text there appears something like a paradox, no two ideas being more opposite than those of mourning and blessedness. Mourning is the consequence of pain ; how, then, can they that mourn be the happy? In saying this, our Lord speaks as one who saw the end from the beginning, and called things that are not as though they were : He points out what is essential as the way to happiness. It is not meant that the mourning is itself the happiness ; but it constitutes that state of mind which is necessary to prepare for the reception of happiness. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

I. It may be proper, before we proceed to the immediate subject, to correct an error that prevails with many. It is often imagined by those who have suffered much in this world, and whose sufferings, perhaps, have been in great part owing to their own misconduct, that there is something expiatory in their sufferings ; that they have thus made some kind of atonement for their sins, and, having suffered here, have the less to fear hereafter. It is unnecessary to inform any who are acquainted with Scripture, that nothing can be more foreign to the genius of Christianity than such an idea. Christianity knows nothing but the blood of Christ as the expiation for guilt. They must be strangely ignorant of God's character and the spirituality of his law, who can suppose any other expiation. There is nothing in the sorrows of time that can provide for eternity. Imagine not, because you are poor, unfortunate, despised by the world, or afflicted in body, that you are more exempt from the sentence of Divine justice. Present sufferings, which are the consequence of sin, not its antidote, have no value except so far as they are improved as the means of our sanctification. It is the natural effect of sin to produce suffering ; it tends to destroy peace,

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

health, reputation, property. Men of the world, thus afflicted, mourn the consequences of sin, not the cause of those consequences—mourn the effects of sin, not sin itself. God complains in Hosea, vii., "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds!" They say "there is no hope," but their mourning springs from an excessive love of this world, from disappointed sensuality, avarice, or ambition. Like Micah, they exclaim, "Ye have taken away my gods!" Thus "the sorrow of the world worketh death:" the world has many such martyrs; but they are not those of the Church, not the martyrs of penitence and piety.

II. We come now to state, positively, what sort of sorrow that is which makes the happy man.

1. It is "sorrow for sin after a godly sort;" not sorrow merely for the effects of sin, but sorrow for sin itself, and this "after a godly sort; for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto life, not to be repented of." It is not itself repentance, because this is a practical change; but it is a grand means of producing this change, and it arises from the view of sin in its true light, as contrariety to God, neglect of the highest good, ingratitude to the best Friend, rebellion against our Maker; the view of sin as sin, independent of its effects. This sorrow produces an abhorrence of sin; he who feels it will have no idea of retaining a single sin in his heart; he will cast away his sins, as idolaters their idols, to the moles and bats. The elements of repentance are found in the mourner's mind; he turns to the Lord in earnest, yields himself up to be guided by the Lord, and utters the language of Ephraim: "Surely after I was turned, I repented, I was ashamed, yea, confounded."

And such are blessed; they are comforted by the balm prepared for those who thus mourn; they hear that "our God is merciful, and will abundantly pardon." Yet their sorrow will not end here; their mourning assumes a higher character; it becomes more liberal and filial in its nature; they learn to love much, because much is forgiven. Like the Jews, when converted, they "look on Him whom they had pierced, and mourn apart with a great mourning." Ezekiel represents their case when he says, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all thou hast done." If God has forgiven them, yet they can never forgive themselves; and never do they see sin so great as in the cross of Christ, where they see at once its evil and God's mercy! Through his whole course, the Christian mourns; he mourns the remains of sin in the spirit of Paul: "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil I would not, that I do: I find a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me; I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." This is a continual source of holy

mourning, that accompanies the saint even in his highest elevations; he can never forget that he is a sinner—never forget the wormwood and the gall; he carries the exercise of repentance to the very gates of heaven! Those, therefore, who mourn are in the way to happiness; and those who are in the way, are regarded in the text as having attained the end, as being the happy persons.

2. That sorrow which arises from a view of the moral state of the world is a blessed sorrow. The Christian cannot regard with unconcern the whole world lying in wickedness; neither his regard for God nor man permits him to be indifferent to such a scene. To see a world full of all the elements of misery and ruin, in arms against its Maker, saying to God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways!" this has been a grief to good men in every age: "Rivers of tears," says the Psalmist, "flow down my cheeks, because men keep not thy law!" He beholds the transgressors, and is grieved; he remembers that the triumph of the wicked is short; no refinement of society, no polish of arts and manners, can reconcile him to the moral disorder of the world, or veil its real wretchedness from his view; he sees that many of its most distinguished favourites are only "whited sepulchres." Nothing is a surer indication of a right state of mind than a sincere concern for the moral condition of the world. When Paul visited Athens, he was not to be reconciled to the view of its ungodliness by all the splendour of its arts, or the inveterate custom of idolatry, though, perhaps, such a forbearance might have been admired by many who call themselves philosophers, as the mark of an enlarged and liberal mind. In the midst of all that he saw, "his spirit was stirred within him," and, through all that glittered around, he saw the symptoms of spiritual death and eternal ruin! And who, that ever mourned over himself, can fail to mourn over a race thus fallen? But such shall be comforted: there is the prospect of a period approaching, when "the Spirit shall be poured out on all flesh, and all shall know the Lord;" and there is a day when the reasons of all this disorder, which we cannot now explain, shall be cleared up, and it shall be seen and owned that "He hath done all things well!"

3. A third cause of that mourning which our Lord pronounces blessed is, the very limited progress of Christianity in the world. Certainly it is a fact equally melancholy and strange, that such a religion, attested by such evidence, should have been so slow to spread, either in its internal influence or its outward profession; that the pagan world is still so vast; that still the greater part of those called Christians live as worldly lives as if heaven had never been brought to light, as if Christ had never come, indulging all the same passions, the same vanities and vices! "This is a lamentation, and it shall be for a lamentation." This would have done more to chill the ardour of the apostles than all the

persecutions they endured! But here, too, there is a consolation: God will once more set his hand to his work, retouch his creation, renovate the world, infuse a new life and spirit into the dead mass, and call into action new elements in the moral world! When "his word shall have free course, and be glorified, and a nation shall be born in a day!"

4. The scandals occasioned to religion by professing Christians, by the inconsistent lives of those who call themselves the friends of religion, are a fourth cause of sorrow to a pious mind. This is the greatest wound that can be inflicted on the sacred cause, and affords the greatest strength to its enemies. And on this account the Christian feels humbled and concerned, "as when an armour-bearer fainteth." The wicked feel themselves confirmed in vice, their conscience is refreshed and invigorated; but the pious are grieved, as by a wound almost incurable, when the highest professors are found to have been only the most dexterous deceivers; when the foundations of all confidence in religious profession are shaken, and none can be known to be sincere. But grief on this account is a sign of your sincerity and your zeal for God: and ere long the Canaanite shall dwell no more in the land; none uncircumcised in heart shall remain among the people of God.

5. Sorrow that we can do so little good may be numbered in the list of blessed sorrows. Every sincere Christian feels himself a public character, called to do good to others, and he desires to be useful. What grief has arisen to many from the disappointment of this desire! How often, for instance, has the pious minister been ready to exclaim, "Who hath believed our report?" He waited long for the signs of a new life among those that were dead in sin, and was still condemned to see all the same as before, the same sensual, worldly, proud, avaricious, cold, and formal character as at first! But grief like this shall be comforted: his record is with God; probably the seed, hid for a time, will rise at last; the bread, cast on the waters, shall be found after many days: at any rate, the work returns to the bosom of God, to whom it was devoted; like David, who had it in his heart to build the Lord's house, and, though he built it not, his design was accepted, and the little success and encouragement that attended it gave the endeavour a stamp of greater sacredness. Such regret is more noble, and, perhaps, even more delightful, than any thing short of success, as it is of a divine nature.

6. They that, from a sense that this world is not their congenial element and home, groan under the desire of a better, even a heavenly state, are blessed in their mourning. "We," says the apostle, "who are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened, and being willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord." "We who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit groan in ourselves, waiting for the redemption of the body."

Place a Christian in the most elevated station of this life, he would not wish to linger in it long; he regards the present rather as a state of trial than as a scene of enjoyment: he feels himself a stranger, not at home; having had a glimpse of the heavenly city, he sighs after it, and he can never be satisfied until he sees God—until, with the Psalmist, he beholds his face in righteousness, awaken after his likeness, and is satisfied with it! The present is to him rather a state of fear and trembling than one of indulgence. He has had a view of that better world, such as makes all that could be offered him in this appear but as an insult and a mockery in comparison with such a portion!

And such a mourner shall be comforted: he shall not be disappointed of his hope: God will satisfy the desires which He infused: the Christian shall depart to be with Christ, with the only happy* God!

Such is the character of the truly blessed man: but it is not the character of the worldling, who says, "Soul, take thine ease;" who rests in the world as his portion and home; who has lost the sense of his original, his birthright, his immortal prerogative, and judges himself unworthy of eternal life!"

But let not such a character as this belong to any of you, my brethren! Show yourselves to be men, by aspiring after the only happiness for which man was made! Or, rather, to take a still higher and more sacred view, let us show ourselves to be Christians in spirit as well as name, by consecrating our hearts to the pursuit of those blessings which Christ came to bestow! Remember, if you will reap your harvest here, you cannot reap it hereafter; if you are determined to have your portion in this world, you must be content to pass into an eternity of infinite loss and destitution! But if, on the contrary, you are ready to suffer, should suffering be necessary, in the path of Christ, you shall also be glorified with Him; if you follow Him in the state of humiliation and patience, you shall follow Him to the state of bliss and glory in which He now dwells!

* In unison with Dr. Campbell, whose lectures he had attended at Aberdeen, and whose version of the gospels he often commended, Mr. Hall preferred the term "happy," as an equivalent for the Greek μακάριος, to "blessed," which more properly represents εὐλογητος. In two places only is the former epithet applied to God: 1 Timothy, chap. i., v. 11, and chap. vi., v. 15. "Happy" refers to the state of mind, "blessed" to the Divine favour attendant on him whom we so represent.—GRINFIELD.

XXXI.

THE BEATITUDE OF THE PURE IN HEART.*

MATTHEW, v., 8: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, February 24th, 1828.]

OUR Lord commenced his ministry by describing the essential features of the Christian character, and the real ingredient of happiness. It is obvious how different is his doctrine on the subject of happiness from the notions of men: He places felicity in quite another quarter from that in which the world seek it. He came to communicate blessedness; and He propounded the doctrine, before He bestowed the blessings themselves; He taught us where happiness is to be found. We are not to expect to find it by chance; it does not light upon us of itself from above: it must be sought, and sought in the right way: in the way revealed by the gospel. If "the pure in heart are blessed," none who are of a different character can be happy. We may consider, first, the character; and, secondly, the blessedness here presented.

I. The character is that of "the pure in heart." Purity, in its most usual acceptation, denotes the restraint of the bodily appetites and passions, especially as it relates to the virtue of chastity; a most distinguished part of Christian morality, as contrasted with the notions and manners of an evil world. "Uncleanness," says the apostle, "let it not be so much as named among you, as becometh saints;" "on account of which," he adds, "the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." Purity in heart implies a care of the heart; a discipline of the imagination; a covenant with the eyes not to look upon vanity; an avoidance of all appearance of evil; a conscientious regulation of our secret thoughts and affections, as in the sight of that God with whom we have to do, and who requires purity, as well as truth, in the inward part. Sin is represented in Scripture as defilement, pollution; the Holy Spirit is represented as effecting a purifying process in the soul. As filthiness dooms a person to shame and solitude, so sin alienates and separates from God: this was the first effect of sin on our first parents, who hid themselves from their Maker. When any one lives in amity with sin, there can exist no communion with the Divine Being. "What agreement hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial, or the temple of God with idols?" The Spirit of holiness, whose very nature is the highest purity, will hold no friendly association with a heart in which impure affections are permitted to dwell. Accordingly, the Apostle John, when he says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Fa-

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

ther and with his Son," adds, "if we have this fellowship, we walk in the light, as He is in the light."

Who, then, are "the pure in heart?" Their purity is opposed, first, to the semblance of virtue, the appearance of purity, assumed for worldly purposes. The thoughts must be regulated; the affections purified; a law of order, conformable with the Divine law, established in the inmost recesses of the mind. Secondly, this purity is opposed to mere external acts; there may be a correct exterior, and an outward reform; while extreme pollution remains within, while the heart is closed against the beauty of holiness, while no respect is felt for the Divine will and law, no thirst experienced after interior and real purity: such a character will be of no account with God. The pure in heart make a conscience of their desires, control their thoughts and passions within; abstain from coveting as well as injustice, from impure imaginations as well as actions; do not act a part before men, but aim to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." They make the department of the heart the object of their care, as God requires; and have "respect to all his commandments." Of such it is said that "they shall see God," and of such only. None but candidates for holiness, none but those whose hearts are smitten with desires of spiritual perfection, shall ever see God, or prove successful candidates for heaven. Yet let it not be supposed that we can here attain the perfection which we desire; far otherwise: if you have ever asked any humble Christian, he would tell you that he is conscious of innumerable defilements in his inner man; but such a person continually purifies himself more and more, until the day when he is presented holy and without blame before the throne of God.

II. Consider the blessedness of the pure in heart: "they shall see God." Our Lord, you observe, has placed happiness not in external relations; these are temporary, and pass away like the fashion of this world—they are a flower, which, however graceful, is fugitive and evanescent: but happiness is placed by our Lord in the internal state of the mind, is regulated by the will, and conformed to the likeness, of the Eternal Being; for this alone is permanent. Purity is the health of the mind; in proportion as the mind is purified, in that proportion it is reinstated in a capacity of true enjoyment. For some the promise of such a blessedness may have little attraction: such are not accustomed to connect with the idea of Deity any other ideas than those of authority, power, and retiring majesty; their notions of felicity are not associated with the character or presence of God. But in what an unnatural posture of soul towards the best of Beings must such persons stand! How deeply alienated must they have become from the eternal and all-loving Parent of the universe, the Father of our spirits, the Fountain of good, in whose presence and favour is the fulness of joy! To see his face, however, is promised by our Lord as the consummation of felicity. This expression denotes,

1. The knowledge of God, as enjoyed by the saints in a future state. God the Father dwells in light which none can approach; He is the

King invisible; none hath seen Him, none can see. To "see God" is to have that full knowledge of his character, his providence, and his grace, which constitutes the bliss of eternity. Now we see God as by a dim reflection, but then face to face; now we know Him in part, but then even as we are known; then this imperfect vision of faith will be changed into a Divine and beatific manifestation of God. All that majesty, which now overawes us, will then be revealed to our prepared spirits; the Divine beauty will then fill all the powers, and irradiate all the recesses, of the mind. And to those who have here delighted to trace God in his works, his providence, and more especially in his word and grace, how delightful will be this intimate knowledge of the Father of spirits!

2. By "seeing God" we may understand that nearness to God, that taste of his favour, which belongs to those whose hearts are purified by faith through the Spirit's operation. Thus, in Esther, we read of the seven princes "which saw the king's face;" and, in Daniel, of the four chosen persons "who stood before the king, Nebuchadnezzar." And our Lord, speaking of little children as patterns of his disciples, says that "in heaven their angels behold the face of My Father;" meaning, not merely that those angels are in heaven, but that there they hold an eminent station, that they are highest in his kingdom. "The pure in heart" will be distinguished by such a near approach to God, such a delightful intimacy with their heavenly Father; He will welcome such in the words, "Ye shall be heirs of all things; I will be your God, and ye shall be My sons and daughters!"

III. Let us next consider the connexion which subsists between purity in heart and this vision of God. Abstractions may be pursued independently on any peculiar state of the heart; but character cannot be appreciated or enjoyed but by congeniality of mind. The impure cannot discern the beauty of holiness; the selfish cannot rejoice in the philanthropy of a Howard, a Thornton, a Wilberforce, brothers of kindred spirit; the sensual and filthy cannot sympathize with the saints in their abhorrence of impurity, their hatred of the garment spotted by the flesh. Let the beams of the Divine character be shed on the unholy mind, and its darkness would not only not comprehend, it would repel, that brightness; it would recoil from such a contrast to its own nature. But to come into immediate contact with a holy God; this must be, to those who love darkness, insufferable pain, in proportion to the fulness of that light! to stand before infinite purity, what must it be to those who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue! for God is holiness personified. On the contrary, those who love holiness, those who war against sin, those who have repented a thousand times of the evil that dwells within them, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, to them holiness must be heaven; they will then reach the goal, rest in the haven where they would be, and, like the Psalmist who speaks their mind, "be satisfied when they awake in the likeness of God, and behold his face in righteousness!"

IV. With respect to the means of attaining this character: there must be the habit of meditation on God, and communion with God:

we must set Him always before our eyes, if we would attain true holiness. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord." And to behold the Divine character, we must "behold the Lamb of God;" Christ being the image of the invisible God, the shining forth of his glory. We must endure as seeing Him who is invisible, and have a constant respect to the recompense of his reward. The essence of that reward consists in the perfection of those dispositions which we here pursued, and imperfectly attained. This is the fruition of God, which He will give to "the pure in heart." God will make himself over, as it were, to such, in all the plenitude of his holy blessedness.

V. By way of improvement, let me inquire,

1. Are you in such a progress of character as may fit you to see God? You are drawing near to death: you will very soon go hence, and enter into that state where God is all in all: the question whether we are in a process of sanctification, in a state of convalescence from our fatal malady, is that on which all our destinies turn. And the Christian religion alone opens the way to holiness and God, by the doctrine, the grace, the blood, and Spirit of Christ: acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace, through the medium of the Saviour. How can you escape if you neglect so great salvation? Can you suppose that the awful penalties of the gospel will be cancelled in your behalf? Nothing but condemnation can be your lot, if you are found preferring darkness to light, because your deeds are evil! if you refuse to enter in when such a glorious door is opened before you!

2. Let such of us as profess themselves the followers of God, such as unite in the bands of Christian fellowship, see that we are aiming at holiness; purging ourselves from all impurity of the flesh and spirit; using the precepts, promises, comforts of the gospel with a view to our sanctification: that we are overcoming the world by our faith; subduing our whole will to the will of God! Otherwise we may have a name to live, while we are dead. We must consecrate ourselves to walk as He who has called us walked; to be pure as He is pure. Soon we must all appear before Him; we must be brought into contact with God: the thought of God must be with us as an eternal thought, and possess our spirits, either as the thought of an infinite good gained, or an infinite good lost forever! Let us now seek a complete deliverance from the power of sin, by the purifying Spirit of grace: this is the very purpose for which Jesus Christ came: "He came to bless us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities." He came that we might be pardoned, justified, sanctified, and prepared for eternal glory!

XXXII.

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.*

EPH., vi., 12: *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

[Preached at Cambridge, in July, 1802.]

THE Christian life, my brethren, is set forth in a great variety of forms in the New and Old Testaments, in order to impress us with just conceptions of it, and to point out its high necessity and importance. The Bible affords this variety of forms, that we may the more fully comprehend it; and thus the Holy Ghost gives us "*line upon line, and precept upon precept.*" It is of the greatest consequence to become true Christians; and it is of equal importance to know the character, and be acquainted with the situation of true Christians, in order that we may form a right estimate of the requirements of God, and, by comparing ourselves with this standard, receive that admonition or warning which we need.

Great earnestness must be employed, if we wish to attempt the Christian warfare with any success. It would be strange, indeed, for any one to be thus engaged, as in a combat, and not to know that he was engaged. It would betray great indifference in a warrior engaged in a conflict, not to show sensibility to his circumstances; so, equally strange would it be for a Christian to live in profound security, as if there were no powers to engage, and no victory to obtain.

Without any farther preface, permit me to explain, first, *The phrases here employed;* and, secondly, *The nature of the warfare, and the enemies we have to engage.*

I. These phrases are evidently figurative. A Christian is not at war in the literal sense of the words; but these are very apt and proper figures, which the Holy Spirit adopts to reveal the fact under sensible forms. The phrase "flesh and blood" is intended to denote the principle of corruption in man; and it stands opposed to that principle of holy rectitude implanted by the Spirit: "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" In a similar manner, the Apostle Paul, in another epistle, places them in opposition to each other: "*For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these two are contrary the one to the other.*" Sometimes the phrases are used in a more general sense, for human nature at large, or for all mankind. The same apostle, when declaring

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

his commission, says, "*Immediately, I consulted not with flesh and blood.*" In like manner, in describing the law of God as not forming a justification to the sinner, he says, "*By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.*" The Apostle Peter also says, "*All flesh is grass,*" which is to be understood as referring to our common humanity. It there is denominated flesh, from the visible part of human nature, to signify the whole of man, or the whole race of men. "*We wrestle*, then, *not with flesh and blood.*" The apostle's meaning evidently is, that it is not an external warfare; it is not a worldly, a carnal, or outward one; but that it is spiritual, and with the rulers of darkness.

Again, by "the rulers of darkness" we are, no doubt, to understand Satan and his emissaries, or the devil and his angels. These are represented in Scripture as being invisibly employed in propagating ignorance and mischief, and engaging men in the service of sin. Sometimes he is called the old serpent, from his seducing our first parents; at other times, the prince of the power of the air; and, in order to signify the extent of his dominion, he is called by the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, the *god of this world:* "*In whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious knowledge of God should shine into their hearts.*"

These spirits are here represented as ranged after a certain order, being in a state of subordination; so that it is not a dominion of anarchy and confusion, but they are placed under the devil, or Satan. As these evil spirits were originally angels in heaven, we have no reason to suppose they have lost their power and greatness by their fall, or that subordination is a blemish; for we have reason to believe it exists in greater perfection of order among these superior beings, which increases their capability of mischief, and power of co-operating in some general purpose. As we read in Scripture of angels and archangels, so we read of the devil and his angels; which conveys the idea of government and dominion; otherwise it would be a state of discord and rebellion. The empire of Satan, then, is compatible; and in this consists the force of it, and the impression which is made upon the kingdom of God and of his Christ. The Saviour, when he rose from the dead, we are informed, "*triumphed over principalities and powers, and led captivity captive.*" These evil spirits were then overcome and cast out. They are said to be "*the rulers of the darkness of this world;*" for "*darkness had covered the earth, and thick darkness the people.*" Idolatry everywhere prevailed. Satan exercised dominion over men, blinded their understandings, and filled them with prejudices against every thing serious and divine; the instruments of his dominion were darkness; for all sin is founded upon darkness, as all holiness and virtue are founded upon light. Hence the kingdom of Jesus Christ is a kingdom of light, and stands opposed to that of Satan, in that it enlightens the understanding of men, by correcting

their consciences, by subduing their passions, by giving them just views of happiness, of God, and of themselves. Thus they become converted, by placing things in their proper order. Hence the Apostle Paul, in describing the nature of the kingdom of Christ, says, it was "*to open blind eyes; to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan; to translate them into the kingdom of God;*" and it was in order that they might "*receive an inheritance among them that are sanctified.*" We find also, in the first chapter of Romans, there is an express allusion to the state of the heathen world, which was immersed in utter darkness, under the bondage of Satan; and this prevails still in the mind of every unregenerate man, and is only removed by that light of life which beams forth in the gospel. In another epistle, the apostle describes them as "*walking in the vanity of their mind, having their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them.*" To express this darkness, you see how he accumulates expression. Satan ruled in the midst of this darkness; it was his own empire; he headed the world, so that altars were erected to him, and the Eternal Creator was unknown and unacknowledged in his own world.

Another epithet which the apostle here uses is, *spiritual wickedness in high places.* I imagine he means not to imply the wickedness attendant on fleshly lusts, which pollute human conduct; but such wickedness as spirits contract, consisting in enmity to God, in dislike to his authority, and opposition to his government, and a wish to plunge others into the same state of misery. For as there are lusts in the flesh, so there are lusts in the mind; the one assimilates us to brutes, the other to Satan, the god of this world. Again, we read, *wickedness in high places.* Here, "places" is put in a different letter, not being in the original, and the term probably might be rendered "things," of which it seems most natural to interpret it. There is no other instance of its being rendered *places.* It may, then, be "wickedness with spirits in heavenly things;" that is, living in enmity to the dominion of God; for place can have no relation to spirits. With this force, then, they meditate opposition, they attack the kingdom of God; and that from which they endeavour to allure men is the fear and favour of God. These are the enemies with which we combat and wrestle; and if we really are set in opposition to them, what vigilance, my brethren, is requisite to engage in such a warfare! It is *not with flesh and blood,* but *with principalities and powers, with spiritual wickedness.* It is true that you see not these enemies; your eyes behold them not, your ears hear them not: but on that account they are the more dangerous; and if they succeed, they will carry you away captive at their will. Their force consists in their invisibility: "*We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly things.*" As it is of the first importance for a man to be

acquainted with his enemies, who and what they are — for as, without this knowledge, he can neither choose his weapons nor employ proper caution—so, also, it is necessary to be acquainted with our own weakness and danger.

II. Permit me, then, to point out to you the nature of the warfare, the character of these great adversaries, and the reason that arises for being peculiarly strong in this combat.

1. These enemies are spiritual. "*We wrestle not with flesh and blood;*" we grapple not with visible, but invisible beings. And their aim is at our souls; against the immortal part of our nature; not that corruptible body which must die, but that immortal part which is never to be extinct. Their aim is to make death terrible, and the resurrection the commencement of our doom.

In consequence of this invisibility, they make their advances when we are least aware; they are present when we think least about them. What caution, what vigilance is requisite, when we are so liable to surprise!

2. These enemies are exceedingly powerful and formidable. This is sufficiently plain from the explanation, and the phrase, *the rulers of the darkness of this world.* As, originally, angels *do excel in strength*, we have no reason to believe that sin has weakened their powers. Accounts are given us, in the Old and New Testaments, of the achievements of angels. It was an angel who slew the first-born in Egypt in a night, and passed over the Israelites. It was an angel that went before them in the wilderness, after the making of the golden calf. He that slew the Amalekites, while Moses prayed, was an angel. When David transgressed in numbering the people, he that gave them up to pain, to pestilence, and to death, was an angel. It was an angel that rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and made a passage for the Redeemer to his Father! We have no reason to believe that the fallen angels have lost any of their original power; they have lost, it is true, their love and devotion, but have turned all their power into mischief. They are referred to in the Epistle to the Ephesians as "*the spirits that rule in the children of disobedience;*" and it is declared that they lead men captive at their own will. It is nothing but the kingdom of Jesus Christ that has cast them out; Satan was *seen to fall like lightning from heaven.* Jesus Christ was manifested for this very purpose, to destroy the works of the devil; to retrace the steps men had gone, by repentance and conversion. These enemies are, therefore, very formidable; and they are only to be overcome by an absolute reliance upon the strength of the great Captain of our salvation. They have governed the governors of the world; they have directed the course of it; they have managed the darkness of it; they have wielded all the force of it; they have tried pleasure and pain; they have excited a spirit of persecution in one age, and then, by flattery and device, and the

charms of present objects, have ruled in other ages. An angel was heard to cry, with a loud voice, "*Wo, wo upon all the inhabitants of the earth, even great wrath;*" but it is added, "*for the elect's sake the time shall be shortened.*"

3. It is of the greatest importance to recollect that these enemies are very crafty; that they are full of stratagem and design, to say nothing of their natural sagacity. The experience in the various methods of temptation for so many ages, and the knowledge they have acquired of the human heart, must be wonderfully great. What an intimate knowledge Satan must have acquired in the way of approaching the human mind! It is said he can transform himself into an angel of light; that is, instead of darkness, put on only the appearance of light. He knows how to adapt himself to the different ages of the Church. He has tried, at one period of its history, persecution; but has found that it was the seed of the Church. He has lately changed his course, and set before Christians the charms of present objects, and adapted them to the different ages of men. To the young, he directs one sort of temptations; to middle age, another; and to old age, another. To the young, he suggests that religion is incompatible with its pleasures, and unfriendly to its gayety; to men of middle age, of avarice, and ambition, he insinuates also that a useful, active life will compensate for what is not given to God—that it is not necessary to be devout, if they are beneficent; to old age, he represents that it is too late, they are too far gone, the evening shades are set in, it is necessary now to give themselves up as much as possible to amusements and indulgence. To the rich, he suggests the necessity of living according to their rank, which makes them proud and voluptuous; to the poor, the necessity of bettering their condition, which often makes them dishonest. Thus the rich are forced into impiety, and the poor into injustice.

If you, my brethren, are at all acquainted with his devices, you will know that he is at one time representing you as secure, in order to induce you to remit your watchfulness, and to think the enemy is asleep, when he is only watching in secret to devour; at another time, he is tempting you to neglect attention to your thoughts, and omit the guard over your passions. If, on the other hand, you have been defeated, he suggests that it is in vain to struggle any longer; that you must inevitably be led captive at his will. He knows how to take advantage of every character and every situation. If he cannot seduce those who have made some advances in religion, he will then turn the Scriptures of truth to his purpose, and furnish from *them* weapons against the souls of those very persons they were intended to save; tempting them to rely upon supernatural, when they are to look out for natural means, or to separate the use of means from a reliance and dependance on the Divine will. Finally, my brethren, those who are not capable of being seduced into sin—those tim-

id, holy souls—he will harass by fears and doubts, that they may lose the comfort of their salvation.

If he finds men live in the neglect of the forms of religion, he will urge a sort of secret satisfaction and complacency that they are not hypocrites; if they live in a rigid observance of these, it is sufficient; and thus he will lead persons to rely upon the forms and services of religion, and merely give the attention of their bodies, while their hearts are going after their covetousness. Such are the stratagems of Satan, that it is impossible to be saved but by a reliance upon Divine grace; and if we conquer in this combat, it will be by the power of the Lord and his might.

4. It is of great advantage to these spiritual enemies, that the principles of our own hearts have a secret alliance with them, and hold open a door of approach. There is an obliquity in our passions, a secret core of dishonesty in ourselves, to favour them. The great adversary traces the inward progress of vanity, while he excites an act of beneficence. He leads some to vaunt themselves of their attainments, to exalt them beyond measure. There is something, my brethren, in all of us, which increases the danger: the world may attempt to deceive us, Satan may attempt to deceive us, but we never can be deceived unless we deceive ourselves. Our enemies must gain an ascendency over our consciences before they can deceive us. We have, then, not only enemies without, but we have enemies within. On this account, "*we wrestle not with flesh and blood.*"

5. These enemies are remarkable in this respect, that they will admit of no retreat—nothing will satisfy them. It is not giving up *something* that avails us, for that only serves to strengthen their claims and encourage their attack. If you think you shall secure one part by giving up another, you will be very much mistaken. If you trifle with little things in order to secure great ones, remember that you give way to an enemy that never spares, an enemy that is ready to strike at your souls. *You*, young men, if you think of going any lengths in temptation, and imagine you will stop at a certain point, remember you open the great breach in your consciences, through which the tides of temptation will pour in, and bear you away with the impetuosity of its torrent. "*We wrestle not with flesh and blood,*" not with principles that have softness and pleasure, but with those adversaries whose element is misery; and if we do not overcome, we are lost and undone.

I would hope, my brethren, that there are some here that may be engaged, by what has been said, to think of entering upon this spiritual warfare; who think that there is some danger in giving themselves up captives to Satan's will, and who are asking, with solicitude, what they must do to be saved. If this be the case, and I hope it may, I would suggest to them two pieces of advice: first, resolve, by the strength of Divine grace, that you will engage, and will overcome. Fix it in your minds that it is necessary that you should engage; that it is *the work* which you are

sent into the world to do; that every moment of your time is misspent which is not given to the care of your soul, and will not tend to facilitate your victory. At least this step will be a great advance; it will prevent you from following the counsels of the ignorant, and the maxims of an ungodly world which is to be destroyed. There is only one voice sounding forth through the thickest of this combat, but it is the voice of the Captain of our salvation—"*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*" God and the Lamb, being present with you, will animate your course. Fix this, then, in your minds—that you *will* overcome; if not, it were better not to have been born. In the second place, let me counsel every one of you to put on the whole armour of God. It is the advice which the apostle gives, and more important advice cannot be suggested: "*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.*" I would recommend this complete armour with which grace furnishes you. "*Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth;*" that is, an upright intention, a serious desire of sincerity, as in the sight of the Lord, without which it is impossible to proceed any steps in religion, for all hypocrisy is abominable to Him with whom we have to do. "*Above all, taking the shield of faith, with which ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;*" that is, a prevailing sense of eternal realities; a conviction that every thing else is fading away; that we are beginning to be what we shall forever be, and every thing else is lighter than vanity; that God has prepared a day in which He will judge the world; that Christ is come into the world to prepare us to meet our Judge. This faith will be to us a shield to an intrepid champion; to cover us, to avert our eyes from ambition, as Moses felt, who "*refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward.*" And "*take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*" that is, let the Scriptures be the man of your counsel. Be much in reading, much in meditating upon them. Crucify every thought and every disposition that will not consist with the practice and temper they enjoin. This will be to you as a sword. "*Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints.*" Prayer, my brethren, is a great and important part of our duty. It is not in the scenes of the world, not in its business or pleasures, but in retirement, that we are enabled to say, "*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" In these seasons, when exchanging the pleasures of sense for humility and self-abhorrence, then we are great indeed. "*Fervent watching,*" it is added, "*with all perseverance.*" Not only praying, but

preparing our hearts for prayer. These exhortations, followed up, will make us more than conquerors, through Him that hath loved us, and will at length conduct us to those peaceful regions, far from the molestation and strife of our spiritual adversaries, where there will be no enemies to engage and no victory to obtain, and where there will be nothing but the remembrance of the combat to heighten the rapture of victory.

XXXIII.

DISTINGUISHING PROPERTIES OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.*

Acts, v., 20 : *All the words of this life.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, Jan. 20, 1828.]

At the time referred to, the gospel flourished at Jerusalem ; the more from the effect produced by the death of Ananias and Sapphira. The sacred historian informs us that " fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things : and of the rest durst no man join himself to them ; but believers were the more added to the Lord." The Church was purified from insincere members ; and yet it was augmented by the accession of sincere : " the word of God grew exceedingly." This raised the indignation of the Sadducees, a sect who set aside the belief of angels and spirits, and confined their whole prospect to the present life : yet, in that depraved age, such persons held high stations in the Jewish Church ; they naturally hated the gospel, as in it they perceived a death-blow to their favourite and licentious speculations : the great doctrine of the resurrection especially excited their hostility : " They laid hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison." The Divine Being deemed this an occasion worthy of his interposition, and sent his angel to deliver them : " The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple, to the people, all the words of this life."

There are probably reasons, with which we are unacquainted, in the economy of the invisible world, why human instruments must be employed in the ministry of the gospel—why there is an incongruity in beings of another nature being so employed. Certainly there is no instance, except that of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in which any other being than one merely human preached the gospel. Yet angels are not unconcerned spectators of the spread of Christianity ; they are " ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation ;" they are subject to the Son of God—his angels ; they are, at least as one passage† seems to signify, invisibly present in Christian assemblies, and rejoice over every instance of conversion.

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.
† The passage to which Mr. Hall probably alluded is 1 Cor., xi., 10.

I shall request your farther attention while we briefly consider, first, the nature of the gospel as here described by the expression, "All the words of this life;" and, secondly, some distinguishing properties of the gospel life.

I. We may briefly consider the nature of the gospel, as here intimated in the expression, "All the words of this life." It is the design of the gospel to restore man to a certain life. With regard to its matter, the gospel is styled the word of truth; with regard to its end, the word of life. The apostles embraced Jesus Christ as "having the words of eternal life." There is a life, lost by the fall to man, restored by the gospel. Man by nature is "dead in sin;" all are such; the apostles knew themselves to have been such: "among whom we also had our conversation in time past, when we were dead in sins, even as others." Christians experience a great transition—no less than from death to life: "by this we know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" "he that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." On one occasion Jesus Christ said, "Let the dead bury their dead;" let those who are spiritually dead bury those who are naturally dead; "but go thou and preach the gospel." Jesus Christ came to give life, and to give it more abundantly; the gospel being a fuller ministration of the blessings related to spiritual and eternal life than the Old Testament. "He that eateth my flesh hath everlasting life; but except ye eat it, ye have no life in you." A new life is conferred on Christians; they are "born again of incorruptible seed by the word of God"—"born, not of the will of man, but of God;" hence they become sons of God. But, as there are no degrees in death—no middle state between it and life—so all that have not this life are spiritually dead. This life consists in the effects of the gospel on the spirits of men. Their state is essentially changed by the introduction of this life—"all things become new." God, who was the object of aversion, becomes the object of love; God, who was disregarded, becomes the chief source of happiness; his favour, which was left out of sight, becomes the great prize and end of our being; we press after this beyond all beside.

II. We may notice some distinguishing properties of this life. None, it is true, can form an adequate conception of this life but those who experience it. This is the case with every kind of life: you could not judge of the life you live, unless you had experienced its functions, its pleasures, and its pains. Similarly, the natural man cannot know the things of the spiritual; they must be spiritually discerned. It is only the Spirit, opening the heart, that can make a man understand "what is the hope of God's calling, and what are the riches of his inheritance, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power in those who believe." Description, however, may convey some idea of this life to others.

1. This is a supernatural and spiritual life. It is not produced by any natural causes or means; none can impart it to another, none can produce it in himself. God must give it; it is called a "new creation," and its subject a "new creature;" "born of the Spirit—born of

God." The apostle carefully excludes all human agency, when he says, "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man." It is produced by the word of God as the instrument; but that word is applied by the Spirit. It is a life quite distinct from every other kind of life; there is vegetable life, distinct from sentient or animal life; and, above this, there is the life of reason, which reaches to the past and the future by reflection and anticipation, and diffuses existence over interminable space; but as far superior to this as this is to the life of mere sensation, is the life of spirituality.

2. This, therefore, is a most elevated life. It brings us into an alliance with the Father and the Spirit by Jesus Christ; establishes a filial relation to "the Blessed and Only Potentate;" leading us to call Him "Abba Father;" it makes us tend to God as our centre, taste the sweets of his favour and friendship, walk in the light of his countenance, and say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son." He who has this life places his interest in heaven: he extends his views far beyond the present scene; he looks with a sort of contempt on the world and all it contains; regards every thing with a sober dignity, as beneath his high calling of God in Christ; he would not exchange the sufferings of this divine life for all that riches could purchase, all that pleasure could offer, all the glory of time: for he feels himself called to the station of those who are "kings and priests to God and the Lamb;" he is enabled to reign over his fleshly appetites and desires, and to sit down with Jesus Christ in heavenly places.

Never, my dear brethren, shall we know what real dignity is till we experience this life; till then our souls cleave to the dust; we lose sight of our proper portion and end. This, my brethren, is the life that Jesus Christ lived: "My meat and drink," He said, "is to do my Father's will, to seek his glory, and to finish his work." Animated by the spirit of this life, He "despised the shame, and endured the cross," because He thus proved in the highest degree his love to the Father. He went to the place of suffering with alacrity; and when He rose from the last supper to go to the cross, He said, with a divine impatience, "Arise, let us go hence!"

3. This is a holy life. It partakes of the nature of its Author, the Holy Spirit: it is given for the very purpose of recovering man from sin to holiness: the necessity that existed for Christ's interposition springs entirely out of this design. It is a life which creates pure desires; wars against every thing base and evil; makes men strive against sin even unto death. Holiness becomes the thirst of the soul; and the saint learns to say, "When I awake in thy likeness, O Lord, I shall be satisfied with it." Christians are united in spirit to Jesus Christ, and, by this union, made partakers of his holiness. "Shall we not," says the apostle, "be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? for he chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness."

4. This is a progressive life. All life is such; such is vegetable, such is human life; at first the natural life is feeble; infancy is a spark easily extinguished, a blossom soon nipped; but it gradually

matures and opens. Thus the divine life is progressive : the views of a Christian become clearer ; his faith strengthens ; his consolations improve ; and, if he has not so much fervour as at first, his increasing stability amply compensates for the decrease. The saints are described as rich and flourishing in old age. Grace is represented as at first a blade, then an ear, then the full corn ; as a little leaven leavening the lump. The Christian pilgrim, forgetful of things behind, presses on to things before ; he is never satisfied until he is with God : his path is like the ight shining more and more to the perfect day.

5. Lastly, this life is an eternal life. "I give my sheep," said Jesus Christ, "eternal life." As this life commences with the eternal purpose and Spirit of God, so it is destined to flourish with God forever and ever : through all the periods of an endless duration they that have this life shall never more die! Jesus Christ declared that He would give "living water ; a well within the soul, rising up unto eternal life!" The life of believers is the same, in its essential spirituality, with the life of those who live in heaven ; they have the same pleasures, the same devotion ; they feed on the same bread, the bread of life, the bread of heaven, with which the Lamb feeds his people above ; they taste the same salvation ; they sing the same new song, their "song in the house of their pilgrimage."

He that has experienced this life has a knowledge of its value that surpasses all that description, even the description given in the word of God itself, can impart to others ; he comes, it may be said, without hyperbole, to the Mount Sion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, to God, to Jesus Christ, and to the blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel. He has had realizing foretastes of unutterable, unchangeable, interminable glory and felicity! he seems almost to have entered within the veil.

But without this life heaven itself, as it is the exhibition of God, must prove a most unsuitable element. There must be a new heart, new tastes, a new life in the soul. They that have not this grand specific must die in their sins. And this is the condemnation, that men will not come to Christ for life! "Come to me ;" "he that believeth my words shall never taste of death." How important that we should all receive with deep attention and affection all the words of that life, in the diffusion of which the angels take so great concern! Where else can we rest with hope or comfort? Nothing can be so great an instance of madness as to reject that gospel which is the only restorative to the end of existence, which qualifies men to live a divine life, and to die full of immortal consolations! Realize, by a happy experience, what is the great gift of God, worthy of Him to bestow, and sufficient for you to receive, as constituting your eternal felicity! Call upon Jesus Christ, saying, "Lord, save me, or I perish!" for He only can save ; He only is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

XXXIV.

MISERY ATTENDANT ON VICE.*

JOB, XX., 12–16: *Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth; yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him. He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again; God shall cast them out of his belly. He shall suck the poison of asps; the viper's tongue shall slay him.*

[This sermon, delivered at *Cambridge*, in April, 1802, was occasioned by the execution of two men, who lived in the neighbourhood of that town, for uttering forged Bank of England notes. Some of these were paid away at several shops in the town; but in attempting to pass one of the notes in a draper's shop suspicion was raised, and while the master was in the act of sending it to a bank to ascertain its genuineness, one of these men snatched it out of his hand *and swallowed it*. They were immediately taken into custody. The solicitor of the Bank of England coming down, and finding it difficult to convict the prisoners, offered a free pardon to the man who had *actually forged the notes*, and who had employed these two men to utter a number of them. The greatest criminal saved himself by turning king's evidence, and thus convicted these two men whom he had associated in his guilt: hence the peculiar adaptation of the words of the text: "He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again; God shall cast them out of his belly." "And a viper's tongue shall slay him." Mr. Hall visited the unhappy men in prison, but he entertained very little hope of the sincerity of their repentance. It having been understood that Mr. Hall intended to improve the event by way of caution and warning, many of their acquaintances and neighbours from the surrounding villages attended on the occasion.—GREENE.]

WHENEVER we attempt to deviate from the path of duty, it almost entirely arises from taking narrow views of our present condition, and the end of our actions. God has so formed man, and so arranged the system of human life, that an attention to our interest, our real interest, and an attention to our virtue, is almost invariably the same thing. And if we take into account a future world, and a state of rewards and punishments, piety itself will appear but as a sort of sublime prudence, making our piety, our duty, and our happiness, to correspond with each other. It is with this view that wickedness, and the absence of the fear of God from before our eyes, are so much adverted to and condemned, particularly in the Psalms, and in the prophetical parts of Scripture. There are seasons, my brethren, when each of us has need to be established in virtue and the paths of innocence, and fortified by every possible form and means.

A consideration of the misery inseparably attendant upon a vicious and criminal course of conduct will form the subject of the present discourse. We shall consider a vicious course,

1st In its commencement.

2dly. In its progress.

3dly. Its completion and final issue, from which it will appear that the path of vice is the path of misery.

First. We are to consider a vicious course with respect to its commencement. It is impossible to understand this aright, unless we take into account some of the avenues through which a man enters upon it.

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

1st. It usually begins by discontentedness with his situation in life; thus, from an over-valuation of the advantages arising from some other imaginary situation, he becomes dissatisfied with his own lot. For example, a man that is doomed to constant labour by the sweat of his brow, views, with a longing eye, the indolence, the ease, and the self-indulgence of that person who lives without the necessity of labour. He fancies he should be completely happy were he to attain to such a condition. He does not know or consider that there is no greater misery than having nothing to do, except not doing any thing. He does not consider the sweetness of that rest which springs from labour. He does not consider that, unless the mind has some employment, or scope outward, it will spring inward. The ambitious, the selfish, or the aspiring man, thinks if he could gain one object more, he should then be happy. He does not reflect upon the tenour of his happiness, which is his virtue and innocency. He does not consider that the different degrees of satisfaction and happiness are not absolute, but only comparative, arising from their tendencies, and how one and another state of life is formed by the habits and turn of mind a person acquires from being accustomed to that state. Take a person of eminent station, and place him at once in a more simple condition, and you might perhaps think that, by his becoming a poor man, he would be a happy one. The habit of expecting certain gratifications and attentions would prevent it, and it is very evident such a change would not be attended with satisfaction. It must be the same with a poor man. He would be agitated and distressed by that very attendance which high rank excites and requires. These, however, are some of the delusions to which a man yields himself, and discontent is one of the many avenues at which he enters into a vicious and criminal course. A poor man first loses his relish for a life of industry and sobriety, and when he loses this, he soon loses his probity and respectability; for he can only subsist by industry, or by theft, or rapine, and the destruction of his honesty is usually the destruction of all sober habits. Let us see, in the next place, by what steps a person advances till he comes to the commission of great crimes, and where they frequently end. It is a very trite remark, but upon that account certainly not less true, "Man does not become wicked all at once, but by degrees." We find he begins with little tricking and pilfering before he ventures upon some great crime. He lies upon the watch for opportunities of little theft, which do not expose him to the lash of human justice; but, by increasing embarrassment in his circumstances, he ventures upon some crime with which is connected a condign punishment. You may easily conceive, my friends, the agony of his mind the moment he has committed a crime which makes him amenable to the laws of the land. Detected, and, perhaps, imprisoned, all objects are new to him; now he cannot reflect upon himself but as an outcast from all his fellow-creatures, as a being without rights; before this disgraceful event, he possessed claims to respect, now to contempt; before he felt the vanity to display his moral qualities, now the anxiety to conceal them. He feels as a being that be-

longs neither to God nor man : all intelligent creation appears at war against him. This is the state of a man conscious of some great crime, having violated the laws of justice. Can any thing be more miserable than such a condition as this ? When the poets, in quest of similitudes, have searched all the realms of nature for a figure of wretchedness and misery, they have gained nothing more than what guilt has furnished to their hands ; nor could you wish a man a greater evil than to be doomed to the accusations of his own conscience, than to be imprisoned in his own wretched existence : "the way of transgressors is hard ;" and "a wounded spirit who can bear ?" Again, the difficulties, also, in which such a man becomes involved by vicious company and evil courses, make the temptations to sin greater than those which first prompted him to commence his guilty career, each of which will be naturally attended with less remorse than the foregoing one, till he becomes audacious in crime ; for the degree of moral compunction lessens under every stage of his progress. The commission of one great crime generally hardens the heart, and leads to the commission of others, as the necessary consequence that results from it: "the wicked is hurried away in his wickedness." Again, the longer a man persists, the more he is racked with the fear of detection and punishment. It is impossible for a person, living in the breach of the laws, not to fear detection ; and this increases the farther he advances ; for what can possibly prevent detection when there are so many circumstances that lead to it ? The part he is necessitated to act is one of dissimulation. If open and communicative, he is ruined at once. If wrapped in closeness and reserve, this makes him suspected ; a hurried step, an averted eye, a downcast look, these are all sufficient to betray him ; hence you will find, that the instant such a person is detected, his character has been long known. Suspicion has long hung about him, and it only wanted the turn of proof to lead to his final apprehension and imprisonment. Suspicion usually precedes detection. What, then, is the consequence of a blasted character ? He has no friends, he is cut off completely from the pleasures of intercourse, familiarity, and confidence ; the rich fearing for their property, the good for their characters, the timid for their lives ; thus all mankind avoid him as a pestilence. The effect of this is to betray the guilty man into greater crimes. Anxious to snatch the opportunity, some accomplice or companion, to save himself, will betray him—like "the viper's tongue, will slay him." Losing all taste for delicate and refined pleasures, he is frequently hurried into intoxication, and riots in expenditure in the society of persons peculiarly devoted to noise and uproar. He is confined to those gratifications which are in common with him and the brutes. He flies from the dignity of reason to the lowest stage of corruption and debauchery.

Another circumstance which follows is, he is a stranger to that tranquillity which springs from a reasonable foresight in the affairs of life. There is, it is true, a great uncertainty about all human pursuits and events. The best of men are conscious of this, and know not "what a day will bring forth ;" but they feel themselves under the

management and control of a supreme hand. Every wise and good man, however, has a certain plan of proceeding. Having chosen and fixed his station in society, he regulates his purposes accordingly, and, making due allowance for contingencies, he knows in part how they will proceed. Reason sits at the helm, and experience is his chart and compass. Though storms arise, and he may be ruffled with care, disappointment, or calamity, yet, in general, he knows which way he is going; and, looking forward without presumption, his object will be possessed according to the settled plan formed in his own mind, and according to the usual course of events, under the guiding hand of Providence. This, my brethren, is a great source of tranquillity; but how contrary to this is the conduct of a wicked man, and what a great stranger must he be to calmness who has no settled plan of life! He becomes involved in constant perplexity and perpetual obliquity. His course is made up of shifts and expedients, and having committed crimes which expose him to public justice, and make life more and more complicated, he must either sit still, or contemplate God as his enemy, and run all risks.

What is he to do in solitude? The evening will return, and spread its shade, but what reflections must be endured? His very sleep is the image of death in its most distressing form. He knows that men equal to himself can crush him to atoms, when united against him; and above is Omnipotence, as his judge and greatest enemy. It is impossible for him to drown the feelings of conscience; having involved himself in great crimes, the less he fears God the more he fears man. Whoever considers this will perceive how impossible it is for such a man to enjoy any repose. "His meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him." How justly may it be said of such, "Misery and destruction are in their paths, the way of peace they have not known."

Thirdly. The final issue and completion of such a course of wickedness in the prospect of death and eternity. That is a point for us all to consider. Death is an event absolutely certain for the virtuous and the wicked; and the best of men have sufficient room to be anxious and deeply concerned when they anticipate the approach of that last enemy. When we are about to pass from an imbodied to a disimbodied state of existence, all the objects of the future world will then be strange and new to us; hence, to meet death with calmness and fortitude, has always been the subject of panegyric, and added to the other virtues. The best of men have sufficient to excite jealousy in themselves at that period. So many sins brought to their recollection, so many duties and opportunities neglected, so many evil tempers indulged, when brought into connexion with the judgment to come, cause painful emotions and feelings of mind in the very best of men. These things will then appear in a very different light when coupled with the purity of that God "whose name is Holy," at whose bar they are about to appear. "Through what variety of untried being" we are to pass no one knows; and this might awaken fear and amazement even in a good man; but we are informed that "angels

are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation," and it may be conceived that it will form part of their ministration to soften and make familiar to us the scenes of grandeur and the glories of that awful world, from which our littleness, as well as guilt, seem to force us back.

Again, the natural afflictions that attend death, the languor and disease of the body, the agonies of expiring nature, in addition to the other circumstances, make death very terrible, so that we shall need all the infallible promises of the religion of Christ, all the strength of faith, and all the hopes set before us in the gospel, to conquer this last enemy. What, then, has the guilty offender to fear? How must he feel in the prospect of that great and awful change, when, leaving the company of men that have disgraced nature, and offended God and man with their crimes, he exchanges the elements of vice and disorder for the rules of eternal justice and purity? When the secrets of his heart will all be made manifest; when the vices that were effaced from his mind will again be made present to him; when he has passed from the sentence and execution of one judge to the final sentence of the Judge Eternal; when, in the past, he sees nothing but the realities of crimes, and in the future, nothing but the images of terror and despair; when earth heaves to expel him from her bosom; when hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming; and when angels stand ready to prevent his entrance into heaven? This is nothing more, my friends, than a description of the course of conduct and feelings, we may conceive, of those two unhappy men who were executed yesterday. You may imagine, had they known of this result, or reflected on the consequences of their crimes, they would never have passed the borders of innocence. Had they known this, how would they have lingered upon the confines of that peace they were about to quit forever? But they were seduced by the prospect of riches; they fancied "wickedness would be sweet in their mouth;" they did not recollect that the cup they were about to drink was "full of the poison of asps." When exposing themselves to the company of wicked men, and joining hand in hand with them, they little imagined "that the viper's tongue should slay them;" that "they should swallow down riches and vomit them up again," that "God would cast them out of their belly."

What would those unhappy men have given, my friends, when the first scene of detection burst upon them, never to have offended? How low and contemptible that gain, how detestable, how hellish that company, would then appear? It is true, you will say, they were convinced of this, but in such situations there is room for repentance. If sincere, there is always room to hope; but there is great reason to doubt of the sincerity of the repentance of persons placed suddenly in such circumstances. There is very little ground to suppose that they can have any well-founded convictions of sin, and any knowledge of real repentance, if not learned before. They must see every reason for fear and apprehension in their peculiar situation, which may be mistaken for genuine repentance. When they find God and man uni-

ted, earth and heaven combined against them; when they find all holy, happy spirits—all the dignity of the human character—all that makes man man, heaven heaven, and God God, leagued for their destruction, it is very possible, my brethren, that this kind of fear may produce greater terror upon the mind than any thing else. They may easily mistake the slavish fear of punishment for true contrition for their crimes. This fear of punishment is very different from that repentance unto life, that godly sorrow and hatred of sin, which true religion requires. Real repentance consists in a deep sense of personal guilt, an acquiescence in the rules of Divine justice, and a hatred of ourselves. This is that repentance which is alone availing, that produceth godly sorrow, that will effect an alteration of principle and conduct; but how is this possible when the experiment cannot be made, and God may put eternity upon their fate, and transmit them to that state and condition from whence there is no return? "Watch and pray, therefore, my brethren, lest ye enter into temptation." Avoid vicious company—resist the first enticement to scenes where pleasure spreads its unlawful charms, where ambition holds out to view its more glittering prizes, and where indolence tempts into effeminate indulgence. Let us pray to God that we may "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us."

Vice has two aspects: one is flattering to the sense when you approach it, but when you have yielded to its allurement it wears a ghastly form. Remember, it is impossible to be happy but in the favour of God, and in the approbation of your own conscience; for the throbbings of a guilty bosom would poison all your pleasures. For this purpose let me, in conclusion, impress upon your minds the necessity of possessing a solemn fear of God. Prudence and worldly policy may do in some seasons and situations, but there are temptations against which nothing can arm us but the fear of God. Flee from the company of the wicked; "misery and destruction are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known," because "the fear of God is not before their eyes." The fear of God, my brethren, will keep us safe in solitude. The fear of God will keep us safe in the unguarded moments of cheerfulness or mirth. The fear of God will quench the fiery lust of passion. The fear of God will be our polar star to guide us through life. He that has virtue, founded upon reason and true religion, is likened by our Saviour "unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

Let us determine upon a holy life, let us place ourselves by prayer under the hands of the Almighty. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, *take heed* lest he fall." Those unhappy men who were executed yesterday confessed they began their wicked course by breaking the Sabbath, and by neglecting the worship of God on his holy day. God has thus punished their contempt of religion; they forsook God, and He forsook them; they lost their virtue and probity when they

lost his fear. He has thus determined, in the order of his providence, that the laws of God and man should inflict their united punishment together. Let us take the warning. Never think, my friends, of being virtuous or happy in any other way, or on any other principle but that of piety. Live in the fear and love of God, and, possessing these, when He, "who, without respect of persons, will judge every man according to his work," shall come, we may humbly hope "to find mercy of the Lord in that day."

XXXV.

THE HYPOCRITE'S INCONSTANCY IN PRAYER EXPLAINED.*

JOB, xxvii., 10: *Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, May 7, 1826.]

THE character to which these words refer is that of the hypocrite. In the preceding words Job asks, "What is the hope of the hypocrite, when God taketh away his soul?" The term "hypocrite" is not used in the Old Testament in the same restricted sense which it now commonly bears, as applied to the conscious pretender to piety; it is there used in a more enlarged meaning, and comprehends every insincere, self-deluding professor of religion, though not supposed to act a part for the purpose of imposing upon others. Many tests are applied in Scripture by which such a character may be tried: one of those tests occurs in the text; in which (according to a well-known mode of speech) the form of a question is used to express a more animated and energetic denial; and in which it is implied, first, that the hypocrite may sometimes call upon God; but, secondly, that he will be essentially defective, by the want of constancy in this practice; he will not delight himself in the Almighty; he will not always call upon God.

I. It is supposed that such a person may for a time observe the practice of prayer. This is no strange or improbable supposition. Prayer, on certain occasions, appears to be almost an instinct of nature. In any sudden calamity, when the creature feels his utter weakness and dependance, and is strongly impressed by the sense of an invisible superior power, at whose disposal he is, it is next to impossible for the most irreverent and stout-hearted not to utter an ejaculation of prayer—just as even the pagan sailors, in the shipwreck of Jonah, not only cried every one to his god, but urged the prophet to call upon Jehovah, and joined him in his prayer to the God of Israel. But if prayer is the voice of nature in the hour of extremity, still more may it be expected from those who live under the light of revelation.

In Christian countries, it may be presumed that few live in an ab-

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

solute neglect of this duty, though by far the greater number neglect it according to its only true and valuable exercise. A deathbed without a sentiment of prayer, where time was allowed to the dying, would be almost too unnatural for fiction itself. Many afflicting visitations of Providence, many impressive means of grace, and alarming representations of sin and judgment, occasion prayer in almost every breast. When conscience is awakened and goaded by the commission of some more than ordinary transgression, the criminal, though destitute of the fear of God, will scarcely refrain from the cry, "God be merciful!" When a season of public terror overtakes a nation, when pestilence rages, and in the midst of life and the scenes of gayety one and another falls on the right and left, prayer will often escape from the trembling survivers. As prayer is merely an instrumental duty, it may be more or less spiritual and earnest. Simon Magus, in the gall of bitterness, uttered a prayer.

II. The chief want of the hypocrite is the want of constancy and perseverance in this sacred exercise. And here we may consider why those who are unconverted in heart—who are not objects of the Divine favour, nor subjects of the Divine grace—why such persons are thus essentially defective.

1. They want the Spirit of God; which is "the Spirit of grace and supplications"—the Spirit that implores grace and utters supplications, causing those on whom it is bestowed to "look on Him whom they have pierced," and to "mourn apart" over the sins by which they have pierced Him. This is the first dictate of the renewed spirit; it is the spirit of prayer; and there is just as much religion in any man as there is of this spirit. The hypocrite has none of this spirit of prayer; he wants this vital principle; he has not received this new law of the new nature. No sooner was Saul convinced of his guilt, than it is said, "Behold, he prayeth:" it was the first symptom of the new life which he had received; and his future breath was that of prayer. If you have not this spirit, begin with asking earnestly for it; if you have it, exercise it diligently, and ask for its increase. "Men," says our Saviour, "ought always to pray, and not to faint."

2. A second reason why the hypocrite fails to persevere in prayer, is that which the text expresses in the former clause: he does not delight in God. Those in whom we take delight, we frequently approach; those in whose converse we find no pleasure, we avoid. Of Doeg, the Edomite, the murderer of the priests, it is said that he was "detained in the presence of the Lord." Men are alienated from God, until a change has passed upon their hearts. But if we love God, though we see Him not, our thoughts will seek him by meditation—our desires by prayer. To others prayer is like a burden dragged after them with trouble, and let fall as soon as possible—an encumbrance that does not belong to them, from which they are glad to escape. The blessed God is to be loved and sought for himself in the first place, and not merely for his gifts; but hypocrites desire only what God gives, not what He is in himself: if they pray, it is for his inferior favours, not for a communication of his own blessed spiritu-

ality; they have no sympathy with the Psalmist when he said, "My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God."

3. This leads us to notice, as a third reason for their inconstancy in prayer, that hypocrites do not feel their wants. The poor in spirit are the true disciples of Christ; such as feel their spiritual wants—such as thirst for what they have tasted indeed, but merely tasted; they have tasted the streams, and they long to drink at the fountain—they groan under the feeling of their own emptiness, and aspire after the fulness that dwells in God—they are always pressing on, through all difficulties and trials, to their heavenly home—they are often ready to sink, often crying out, "Hold thou me up:" they have to fight against a combination of powers—they want aid for their weakness; and pray with all prayer, as the grand weapon of their warfare. Others may be rejoicing in their corn and wine, but the good things of this life will not satisfy *their* spiritualized desires; and with groanings that cannot be uttered, the Spirit is often breathing in their hearts the desire, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us!"

4. Hypocrites neglect prayer because they cannot reconcile its exercise with the practice of sin. All unconverted persons indulge some neglect or act which their conscience disapproves. The Puritan divines had a saying, "Either sin will make a man leave off prayer, or prayer will make him leave off sin." One of the two must necessarily increase, the other decrease. How can that man who lives in indulged rebellion against his Maker, and "rushes on the thick bosses of God's buckler," dare to pray? How can he who perseveres in prayer, return from that sacred exercise "as a dog to his vomit, as a sow to her wallowing in the mire?" Sin repented is an urgent incentive to prayer; as the penitent publican smote upon his breast and prayed; but sin indulged is the quenching of the spirit of prayer; had the publican resolved to retain his sin—had he rolled it as a sweet morsel under his tongue, never could the cry have risen from his heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

5. The prayers of the hypocrite tend to their own extinction. In such prayers there is no principle of vitality. Such a person merely wants to gain a smooth opinion of his state, a false peace, the forced quiet of an accusing conscience: sin is felt as alarming, but not hated; the hypocrite would have his wound healed slightly; he hopes to be cured, as it were, by his own duty, not by the blood of Christ; and thus he goes on in an alternate performance and neglect of prayer, in alternate fits of devotion and irreligion: his prayers have a tendency to terminate themselves; they are "like the morning cloud and early dew that soon passes away."

Are none such present? Why, then, did you leave off prayer? You prayed that you might obtain peace, and no sooner had you obtained it than you ceased to pray. Your prayers only calmed you in vain, lulled you into a more fatal security than ever, otherwise you would have persevered and increased in prayer to the end. The advice to such is, count all your past devotion as nothing: living without prayer, you are living without God: begin your religion afresh, by repentance

and faith: penitently cry to God for his Spirit, the Spirit that manifests and endears Christ to the heart. Never will you find rest until you find it in his arms: He only is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man can come to the Father but by Him." Then will your prayers be owned and crowned by God.

But estrange yourself from God by neglect of prayer, and He will estrange himself from you: this is to shut out the fulness of God from your soul, to thrust away from you the overture of eternal life! The deathbed reserves its keenest anguish for those who, in the midst of religious advantages, never pray. How shall your heart endure, or your hands be strong, in the day when He shall deal with those who have thus neglected Him?

XXXVI.

COVETOUSNESS.*

LUKE, xii., 15: *And He said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, Feb. 7th, 1831. *Mr. Hall's last sermon.*]

THE Saviour of mankind, when He appeared in the world, appeared in the character of a servant. While, however, this was the case, there existed a general impression of his dignity and greatness. This is evident from the passage now under consideration, where we are informed that a certain person came to ask Him to interfere in the distribution of certain property. But He did not come into the world for such a purpose; He came "to redeem Israel." He might, certainly, have exercised his authority in the manner solicited; but it formed no part of his mission to mankind. He did not, however, let the opportunity escape Him which this incident afforded of imparting instruction, but immediately embraced it for that purpose; and He here gives a lesson to his disciples who surrounded Him which it would be well for *us* also to improve. "And He said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

In considering this portion of Divine truth, with a view to our edification, we shall,

First, Endeavour to show in what covetousness consists.

It must be very obvious, to every reflecting mind, that the mere possession of wealth is not inconsistent with Christianity, any more than with the former dispensation. Abraham, Solomon, Josiah, and, in later times, Joseph of Arimathea, were distinguished for their extensive possessions. There were also wealthy persons in the Christian Church, for there was no division of property beyond the pre-

* From the notes of the Rev. F. Trestrail.

cincts of Jerusalem; and even that arose from the peculiar situation of Christians at that period, which was a most disturbed and agitated one. In fact, a desire to be possessed of wealth with a view to provide for our wants, and those of our families who are dependant upon us for support, is not only *not* covetousness, but is perfectly natural and right. Indeed, the desire for riches can never be wrong, when kept within the limits of benevolence and justice.

If there were no desire for wealth, there would be no need of it. It would soon cease to exist at all; and society would go back into a state of actual barbarism.

Covetousness is, then, the *love* of money, or of any wealth which is considered the standard of property. It is, therefore, properly speaking, the love of money for its *own sake*, in distinction from the love of money on account of those things which it may procure, which is not covetousness.

For instance, if a man be engaged in war, he may desire to have wealth for the purpose of maintaining himself in arms. Cæsar was such a person. But no one would say that his character was degraded by the love of money. The desire for it, in his case, was entirely a subordinate emotion.

There is another class of persons who may be properly described as "lovers of pleasure." They are constantly occupied in its pursuit. They will endeavour to accumulate wealth, and may appear to have set their hearts upon it. But pleasure is the ultimate object they have in view. They seek to acquire riches, not for their own sake, but as a means of procuring enjoyment.

When, however, men go farther than this, and settle down in the love of money for its own sake, without any regard for what it may procure for them, *then* they indulge the vice of which our blessed Lord, in the language before us, warns his disciples to beware. There is, perhaps, no such distinction as that we have specified found in the Scriptures; but, in order to distinguish it from other vices, it must be confined within such limits, since, as we have before remarked, the desire of wealth is not criminal, when kept within the bounds of benevolence and justice.

It may, indeed, appear a strange thing that a rational being should love money for its own sake. But it is an extraordinary instance of the infatuation of sin. If the power of gratification could keep pace with the accumulation of wealth, there would be some plea for its indulgence; the endeavour to gratify the desire might not, in such a case, be deemed unreasonable. But, as the power of gratification can only go to a certain extent, no such plea can be urged. It is, therefore, a criminal and degrading propensity; and one which we cannot indulge without contracting great guilt. Our blessed Lord had good reason to warn his disciples of it, and to forbid its indulgence; and that the exhortation to beware of covetuousness is equally deserving our serious attention, will appear from a variety of considerations, which,

Secondly, We proceed to adduce.

1. Consider its influence on the character. It has a tendency to

harden the heart. The claims of benevolence will be perpetually coming in contact with this vice. It will, consequently, shut up the heart against all the addresses of pity, and continually incrust it with the frosts of selfishness. The love of money can never exist alone. He who desires wealth for its own sake will be strongly disposed to injustice. His integrity will be liable to perpetual concussions; it will be assailed by constant temptation, and always exposed to injury. The unjust balance, and the short weight, will be found in the possession of a covetous man. He will be ready to take advantage of the weakness or generosity of those who surround him. These habits of trifling with integrity will invariably harden the heart. If he be possessed of power, that power will be employed for bad purposes. If he occupy a station of trust, that trust will be abused.

It also tends to *contract the understanding.* How can the love of truth have place in the mind of any man who regards money as the *greatest* good? He has no time to devote to the pursuit of knowledge. Without cultivation, his mind will soon run to waste. He is chained down to one idea, and that the most barren of all. His understanding will soon become so rusted and contracted, that there will be none of those exercises of it on which all just views of difficult subjects depend.

The covetous man is also the *object of contempt;* such a man has no refuge from universal unpopularity but in looking on his wealth. When a person obtains money for purposes of honour or power, the desire of it will soon subside, or, at least, as soon as the object is obtained. But when he loves money for its own sake, the passion will grow; it will have no limits, and can never be entirely satisfied.

2. Consider its effect on *our happiness.* The epithet "miser" is applied to one who loves money. Its original signification is *miserable.* This will be found, in a greater or less degree, to be a correct description of the state of every covetous man.

Those who know any thing of happiness, know full well that it arises chiefly from the social state; from reciprocity of feeling, mutual dependance, and sympathy.

The avaricious is, however, an entire stranger to the happiness derived from these sources. He knows nothing of them. He is almost ignorant of their existence. He is a solitary being. He stands alone. What a miserable state of mind must that be which makes a man a stranger to all the charities of life! He desires to acquire, not to enjoy. He can never say that he has attained his end. This is the extremity of wretchedness and misery.

In any country where Christianity has been made known, every man who possesses wealth must feel that he is responsible for its use. Not only is an avaricious man cut off from all the best gratifications of our nature, but when the light of religion dawns on his spirit for a moment, the presence of God, the judge of all, calling him to an account for not using his talents, must be unspeakably awful and terrific!

Man was born for society. He was never intended to exist alone. He is attracted to his fellow-man by common principles of sympathy

and regard. It is manifest, therefore, that he cannot discharge the duties of the social condition when he has no love for his fellow-creatures. But the love of money extinguishes this emotion; for how can it exist where *that* is the *predominant* principle? Covetousness is a vice that not only hardens the heart and contracts the understanding, but it dries up the streams of benevolence and charity, and totally unfits a man for the social state.

3. Consider it *in connexion with death and eternity*. No individual of the human family is exempt from death. It is a debt which all must pay. Death is a most formidable foe. His power is irresistible —his attack cannot be repelled, nor can we elude his pursuit. Money can procure you no shelter from this terrible adversary. You cannot bribe the king of terrors; you cannot purchase a covenant with the grave. If the bribe were offered, it would be spurned; if the covenant could be made, it would be broken. Death will strip you of all your possessions. He will be alike regardless of their glory and their extent.

But how awful is the condition of a covetous man in relation to futurity! God is the supreme good; and his favour and service should be esteemed the highest good and end. But the covetous man makes *money* his supreme good, and its acquisition the chief end of his being. He puts it, therefore, in the place of God. He becomes an idolater, and in a future world will have his portion with murderers and liars, "in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone!"

If there be a word of truth in the New Testament, some preparation is necessary for a future state. But what leisure has an avaricious man to prepare for eternity, when every moment of his time that can be spared from the seasons allotted to refreshment and repose is occupied in the pursuit of wealth, and the energies of his mind entirely bent on its acquisition?

Can the love of an infinite Being have any place in his bosom? Can there be any delight in God, when all his moral perfections are in direct opposition to this degrading and criminal passion? Can there be any aspirations after heaven, any desire or relish for its pleasures and pursuits, or any efforts made to lay up treasure there, when the whole soul is fixed on the accumulation of riches in the present state? Can a man love God or worship his Maker, when he adores an earthen idol, and bows down at its feet? Nothing can be more opposite than these courses of action; and nothing more contrary to another than the happiness of heaven and the love of money. In short, to use the emphatic and impressive language of Scripture, "the love of money is the root of all evil."

The indulgence of this sinful propensity deprives a man not only of present happiness, but of future felicity. Are there any covetous persons in the present assembly? Are there any such *here?* Then remember that the very earth disowns you, society expels you from its bosom; enshrouded as you are in the darkness of your selfishness, the rays of humanity do not light upon you; much less can the beams of that glory in which the Deity resides ever illumine or cheer your solitary and desolate spirits!

Remember that you must shortly appear before the tribunal of God! There you will have to render your final account. A God of justice and truth, a being of mercy and goodness, will try your actions. When you stand in his presence you will be divested of all the circumstances which wealth commands, and appear before Him in the naked simplicity of your moral character. How unprepared, then, will you be to sustain that investigation, or the scrutiny of his eye, who have made money your God, and lived and died in the neglect of the authority of "the blessed and only Potentate!"

XXXVII.

LYING.*

ROMANS, xii., 5: *And every one members one of another.*

AMONG the bitter fruits of our common apostacy is to be enumerated the propensity to falsify the dictates of the mind, which prevails to a great extent in the social intercourse of mankind. "*The wicked*," saith the Psalmist, "*are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, telling lies.*" It is a principle of that corrupt nature denominated the *old man*, which the Christian is under the most solemn obligation to put off. It is scarcely necessary to define a lie. To lie is to utter something contrary to the inward sense of the mind. This vice prevails in very different degrees. There are some who make no scruple of violating truth on every occasion. The practice of falsehood is perfectly familiar to them; and they are prepared to utter it from the impulse of the slightest motives, sometimes without any visible motive whatever.

The most usual temptations to falsehood are vanity, interest, and malice. Multitudes are urged to propagate the most extravagant falsehoods purely from the influence of vanity, which makes them desirous of impressing an exaggerated idea of their rank and fortune, their talents and achievements. If it be allowed to assign the different degrees of guilt attached to different species of falsehood, we should say that those of vanity, though sufficiently mean and dishonourable, are the least criminal, because usually productive of consequences the least mischievous. Lies of interest hold a higher place in the scale of moral delinquency, because they usually involve a portion of injustice; being seldom uttered but with a view to some unfair advantage. The falsehoods so current in many of the lower branches of traffic are seldom uttered without a design to ensnare and entrap the ignorant and unwary, on which account they may be considered as frauds no less than falsehoods.

The most detestable species of lying is that which proceeds from

* From Mr. Hall's own manuscript.

hatred and malice, of which David so bitterly complains in the following words: "*Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue: what shall be given unto thee, or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.*" But though a lie assumes different shades of turpitude from the different motives to which it is to be ascribed; or, to speak with more precision, from the intermixture of other ingredients, besides what enters into the bare contemplation of falsehood, it is never innocent: it is criminal in itself apart from the consideration of the designs to which it may be subservient, or of the passions which give it birth. To these it may owe much alleviation or aggravation of blame; but it is not necessary for a moment to take them into our consideration in order to justify the sentence which condemns it. The practice of deliberate falsehood possesses an inherent guilt, independent of the contemplation of all extraneous circumstances. To demonstrate this is the principal business of the ensuing discourse, in which your serious attention is requested to the following particulars.

1. *We are members one of another.* We are parts of the same body, which the practice of falsehood tends to dissolve and destroy. It is not the intention of Providence for men to subsist apart and alone; but, in aid of each other's weakness, for the relief of each other's necessities, and the improvement of their common advantages, that they should be incorporated in society. Brutes, not being formed into a society, are either altogether destitute of the means of communication, or possess them in a much lower degree. But the means of intercourse are beneficial just so far, and no farther, than the principle of confidence extends. We derive no advantage from the mere act of another's speaking, but from his speaking his mind. It is the persuasion of the agreement subsisting between the words and thoughts [that induces men to place reliance in each other; for if this were absent], there could be no reason for attaching credit to the terms of any compact. A little attention must convince us that, in this latter situation, they would be incapable of proceeding or stopping, and, consequently, that no confidence could ever take its rise among mankind, without supposing a previous sense of the obligation of speaking truth. An inward conviction of this obligation must be presumed in the formation of every compact, and the law which binds us to veracity must be conceived as anterior to the contemplation of all kinds of social intercourse: a fundamental, original law, which lays the foundation of society—the more sacred from its having never known the [period] of its promulgation. It could never be proclaimed by mortal voice, nor established by human authority: it is not the law of any one age, nation, or country; but coeval with the origin of society, and coextended with the existence of the human race. It is the law of nature and the voice of God. It is the cement of the social edifice, the principle which unites the members of that body of which mankind consists; and if charity may be compared to the blood which circulates through the system, truth must be considered as the joints and ligaments which connect the respective parts. Intentional falsehood

is, in every instance, a breach of this fundamental law, impairs the union, and is a violation of our duty, not merely in a private capacity, but as citizens of the world. By poisoning the stream of social intercourse at its source, by impairing the stock of public confidence, it tends to a dissolution of the whole body, and involves a practice which only requires to be carried to a certain extent to destroy it altogether. It is probably owing to a confused perception of these consequences that a detected liar is usually covered with so much confusion, conscious, he scarcely knows how, that he has committed an act of outlawry, and forfeited the rights of a social being. Other vices may be more mischievous in particular instances; but this is ever of such an anti-social character, that it more completely overwhelms the perpetrator with shame and ignominy than almost any other. He can never explain his conduct in a manner completely satisfactory to others, much less to himself. He may insist on the force of the temptation arising from the magnitude of the interest at stake; he may even insist on the innocence and purity of his motives; but in vain—a feature of baseness attaches to his conduct; and a sentiment of self-degradation to his character, which it is impossible to extinguish. Thus we see the force and propriety of the consideration suggested in the text—*We are members one of another.*

The misery accruing to society from a wilful deviation from truth is of incalculable extent; nor is it too much to affirm that there is no comprehensive plan of mischief in which it does not form an essential ingredient. To the machinations of violence and injustice, which disturb and affect the world, it is the chief pioneer; it is indispensably requisite in order to conceal the operations designed to circumvent, and to destroy. It is the covert under which schemes the most hostile to the peace and welfare of society are daily conceived and brought to maturity. It prepares the way for the encroachments of the ambitious, for the circumvention of the unwary, and the oppression of the innocent; and but for the veil which it spreads over the designs of men, the barbarous deeds which excite horror in the recital, the scenes of devastation and blood which at this moment* overspread the earth, could have had no existence. Truth and sincerity naturally ally themselves to equity; falsehood and dissimulation to injustice; nor is it possible to conceive to what extent the latter have unhinged the frame of society, and shook the world with disorder and convulsions. The vice we are attempting to expose is, in truth, the natural ally of every criminal design, and of every base and unworthy enterprise.

Into the private intercourse of life, wherever it prevails, it infuses a mortal poison, robs it of its security, and converts it from an instrument of good into a snare. Where confidence ought to reign, it spreads suspicion and alarm; while, under the pretence of self-defence, it propagates itself. Artifice is opposed to artifice, falsehood is encountered by falsehood, till all the tender charities of life are violated. Suppose it to become universal, the intercourse of mankind

* There is no date to the MS., but the sermon seems to have been written many years before Mr. Hall's death, and may refer to the late dreadful war.

with each other would entirely cease, and the abodes of men be shunned with as much care as the haunts of wild beasts. But the true way to judge of the tendency of a practice is to conceive it to prevail universally, and considering it in this light, which is the only just method of viewing it, we shall perceive that no vice is more destructive in its nature to the well-being of society than the propagation of falsehood. So true is it, that we ought to be deterred from it by the consideration that *we are members one of another.*

2. *It forms a principal part of the image of Satan. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.* He assumed the form of a serpent in Paradise in order to beguile Eve by his subtlety, and is still employed in deceiving the nations. This is the mode in which, as the god of this world, he operates on the children of disobedience. By inflaming the passions, dazzling the imagination with false appearances of good, and turning the attention from the truth, *he blinds their minds, lest the light of the gospel of Christ should shine into them.* Falsehood is the basis of his throne, and the chief instrument employed in propagating his empire, which is emphatically the empire of darkness. As the grace of God effects its purpose by illumination, causing the eyes of our understanding to be opened, so Satan accomplishes his by deception; the former manifests the truth, which the latter suppresses, and prevents its voice from being heard in a tumult of sensual appetites and desires. To one of these two kingdoms of light and darkness every human being belongs; nor is it difficult to determine with whom the habitual liar must be classed. *He is of his father, the devil; and the works of his father he doeth.* Our Lord makes no scruple in affirming that, if we imitate the works of the devil, we are his children; and the propagation of falsehood is an eminent branch of his works, *who abode not in the truth.*

3. *Hence the practice we are reprobating is directly opposite to the character of God.* He is the God *who cannot lie*—not from any deficiency of power (for neither truth nor falsehood have any relation to that attribute), but from the infinite rectitude of his nature, which makes it impossible for Him to act unworthy of himself.

That the Author of our nature is incapable of wilfully deceiving us, that He is the fountain of truth, not of falsehood, is the principle which alone gives validity to all his communications, without the certainty of which we are doomed, wherever we turn, to be the hopeless victims of illusion and error. It is because He is the *Father of lights* that we are justified in expecting truth as the result of our inquiries; our confidence, nay, even the faculties of our minds, rest on no other basis. Conscious it would be the height of impiety to ascribe falsehood to Him, we require no other proof of its criminality, since it were absurd to suppose He could approve of conduct which the holiness of his nature would not permit Him to exhibit. As He is the Supreme Standard of moral rectitude, no higher criterion of right and wrong can be conceived than what arises from the agreement of an

action with his nature and character—on which account he proposes himself to our imitation. *Be ye holy—for I am holy. Be ye followers of God as dear children.* The highest attainment of a creature is, in compliance with the general design of the Christian religion, to become a partaker of his holiness.

The paths of dissimulation are dark and crooked, diametrically opposed to *walking in the light as He is in the light*, which is, however, the indispensable condition of enjoying fellowship with Him. * * * *

XXXVIII.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF SIN.*

1 Kings, xvii., 18: *And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?*

[Preached at the Baptist Association, held at Loughborough, June, 1818.]

It is not necessary to recapitulate at large the circumstances of this transaction. This widow had administered to the wants of Elijah. She had a son, it may be supposed an only child, and this, added to the loneliness of her condition, made him still dearer to her. When her son died, her conscience brought her sins to her remembrance. There is in the human mind a strong tendency to remember sin when we are brought by distress into immediate contact with God. When Peter's vessel began to sink with the miraculous draught of fishes, his astonishment at the miracle, the fear of death, and the presence of a Divine Being, revived within him the memory of his sins, and "he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" And the reason why the widow of Sarepta imagined her loss to be a direct visitation from heaven, was, no doubt, her intimate connexion with the prophet of God.

It is a fixed maxim in the government of God that there shall be, either here or hereafter, a painful remembrance of sin. It is the policy of men to forget sin, to lose its memory in amusement—to stupify the conscience—to dissipate the attention, and divert the eye of the mind from their internal state to outward prospects. Many maxims in the false philosophy of the world tend to extenuate sin, to lessen its horror, and to diminish the apprehension of the wrath of God The palliative epithets given to vice—vivacity, spirit—names allied to virtue, have a dangerous effect upon the mind, and prevent it from taking to itself the full shame and penitence of sin. God is determined to counteract this; He has determined that it shall be adequately felt and expressed. It cannot be that rebellion should break

* Reported in the London Christian Instructer, 1822, conducted by the Rev. Dr. Redford and the Rev. W. Orme.

out in any part of the Divine dominions, and not be remembered and repented of. It is unnatural that so great a source of evil and disorder should be forgotten. God has provided a remedy, but He has connected with it the memory and repentance of sin.

The subject may suggest to us several important considerations. And,

1st. How does God bring it to pass that sin is remembered even in the present life? Men are very apt to forget what they have *done*, but not what they have *suffered*. There is a general tendency in affliction to remind men of sin; it bears the evident marks of the Divine anger, of the frown of God. When men have lost the remembrance of their transgressions, God, by affliction, brings it back to their consciences. Twenty years had elapsed since the brethren of Joseph had torn him from his father's arms, and sold him into Egyptian bondage; but it was not forgotten, it was written in the Divine book, and that very brother whom they had sold to slavery, but who reigned in all the splendour of sovereign majesty, was made the providential instrument of awakening their memory and their remorse. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold also, his blood is required." The chastisement of Divine Providence is intentional; it has a purpose—it is the handwriting on the wall against us, and it has a salutary tendency to soften and to subdue our pride and hardness. When sinners are in health and prosperity, they are careless and high-minded; but when they are afflicted, we find it easy to convince them of their sin; they are humbled in spirit, and their hearts are tender.

2dly. There is a peculiar tendency in affliction to revive the recollection of sin. There is a law of retaliation in the providence of God, that adapts the visitation to the crime. When Adam fell, he had abused the fertility of Paradise; and he was doomed to the barrenness of a world which brought forth spontaneously "thorns and thistles," but corn "with the sweat of his brow:" God took from him the knowledge of good, and suffered him to retain only the knowledge of evil. Adoni-bezek acknowledged this when the children of Israel "pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me." When Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord, he slew him for this reason: "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women." When Abimelech, the illegitimate son of Gideon, slew his brethren, Jotham the youngest escaped; and the curse which he pronounced upon Abimelech and the men of Shechem was exactly fulfilled. "God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abime-

lech: that the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem which aided him in the killing of his brethren." "Fire," literally, "came out from Abimelech and devoured the men of Shechem;" and he himself shortly after perished in an assault upon Thebez, probably the tributary or ally of Shechem.

"Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads, and upon them came the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubbaal." The people of Israel were not content to serve the Lord joyfully in their own land; and they were therefore compelled to serve their enemies in straitness and in exile. This law of retaliation is not confined to the enemies of God. David was punished for the murder of Uriah, by the curse that the sword should not depart from his house forever. When the Jews persecuted and crucified the Messiah, they did it under the pretext that they feared the Romans. "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." And God punished them by suffering those very Romans to exterminate the Jewish *nation*, and to carry away the remnant of the people from their native *place*.

3dly. Though men may not be brought to a sense of sin by any affecting event in this life, they will infallibly be reminded of it in the life to come. This recollection will meet them at the hour of death, it will weigh upon their consciences, and agitate them with the most terrible anticipations. But it will rise in all its horror at the day of the resurrection—of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. The prisoners at our assizes, when they heard the sound of the trumpet that announced the entrance of the judge, remembered their crimes; they retraced all the circumstances which increased their guilt; and when they stood before the court for judgment, instead of feeling any gratification in the sight of a large assembly, of the preparations for the ceremony, and of the decent solemnity which in this country always attends the administration of justice, they were alive only to their own situation—they felt that the general attention was fixed upon them as an awful and shameful spectacle—they thought upon their doom, and every other feeling was absorbed in the sense of shame, and the fear of approaching punishment. Thus, but in an infinitely higher degree, at the last day men will rise to the memory of their sins; they will revise the record of their conscience, and compare it with the book of judgment. The magnificent scenery will not attract, but appal them; they will think only of their sin—they will dwell only upon that which must descend with them to the shades of eternal death; no other thought will occupy their mind; it is written there by the finger of an avenging God, and they will remember it forever.

There are *three* distinct reflections which will then press upon them with aggravating weight.

1st. A sense of the greatness of sin, derived from a consideration of the greatness of the Being against whom it has been committed.

2dly. They will recollect how much God, in his providence, did to prevent them from sin. The way of transgressors they had felt to be hard; they had received innumerable warnings and reproofs—they had felt innumerable restrictions and difficulties; but they had neglected or repelled them all.

3dly. They will remember that they were once under a dispensation of mercy; that, notwithstanding their transgressions, there was yet a free and full salvation; that there was balm in Gilead, and a great Physician there. That after they had sinned—after they were deeply implicated in its guilt, they might have fled for refuge to the blood of Christ, with sure reliance on its efficacy, and to the throne of the Father with certainty of pardon.

Let us close with a few remarks on what has been said.

Even with respect to those who are saved, God never suffers any to come to Him but in the way of penitence. The Spirit is a convincing before he is a consoling Spirit. He breaks down the sinner, lays him prostrate and agonizing at the footstool of Christ, before He raises him to his embrace. The believer never loses the sense of the shame and guilt of his sin, and this remembrance will compel him to refer his salvation only to the Redeemer. In the heavenly world itself will sin be remembered; for the eternal song shall be addressed "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

Never lose sight of this, that sin *must* be remembered either in this life or the next. You may throw it aside—you may heap the rubbish of the world upon it—you may cover it with ten thousand loads of thick earth—you may even thrust it down to the depths of hell—but *in the depths of hell it will meet you.* The remembrance of sin will become the terrible agent of God—it will fasten upon you to all eternity—it will be turned into the worm that never dies, the fire that never shall be quenched.

XXXIX.

REASONS FOR A JUDGMENT TO COME.*

ACTS, xxiv., 25: *As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, May 14, 1826.]

THE Jews, at Jerusalem, having stirred up a persecution against Paul, he was sent, by the Roman captain Lysias, to Felix the governor at Cæsarea, who, having heard of his wonderful history, brought

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

his wife, a Jewess, to hear him relate it, probably from mere curiosity. It was on this occasion that "Paul reasoned" on the topics announced in the text. From these words it appears,

I. That religion is a reasonable thing. It is said just before, that Felix "heard him concerning the faith in Christ;" implying that, in preaching the gospel, the apostle availed himself of the proper use of reason and argument, according to the occasion. He adapted his manner to the character of those addressed: he did this to the Athenian philosophers (Acts, xvii.), citing their own poets, and appealing to creation and Providence: with the Jews, as in his Epistle to the Romans, he reasoned on Jewish grounds; and here similarly adapted his moral reasoning to the Roman governor.

II. We see the danger of trifling with convictions. By such a habit, moral sensibility is hardened against truth. Felix, as we read, often sent for Paul, and communed with him, after this; but, so far as we know, this was the only time that he trembled; he soon relapsed into a false calm, the surest prelude to final ruin.

III. We behold what an elevation is given by religion to the meanest person. Paul, in chains, appeared with dignity, while Felix, on the throne, trembled: the judge trembled before the prisoner! The moral elevation conferred on a person by a good conscience, especially when united with faith in revealed truth, is inconceivable, and utterly annihilates all the artificial arrangements of society.

IV. The principal point which I shall notice, as implied in the text, is, that the doctrine of a future state and judgment (for the one supposes the other) is a doctrine as well of reason as of revelation; not assumed by the apostle as merely a truth revealed, but as one written on the conscience. It is an alternative the most important that can be conceived, whether the whole of man dies, or not, at his death; whether he is the creature of a moment, or an heir of eternity; merely a sojourner here, whose home awaits him in another world. This latter view of man infinitely enlarges his prospect beyond the meanness of the former. Now it never was insinuated that this great doctrine depends merely on revelation. It has received, indeed, great confirmation thence. Jesus Christ has brought life and immortality to light, having illustrated it by his own resurrection; but there are evidences of it quite apart from revelation, other proofs of this persuasion.

1. The justice of God requires it. The existence of God must be assumed, or the argument cannot proceed; but this is assuming the existence of a Being perfect in all those virtues in which man is imperfect. One of these is justice. Now the present state, in many instances, does not exhibit, even according to our imperfect idea, a scene of justice. None will pretend that this is a scene of perfect order: therefore another state is required, to rectify what is wrong and finish what is imperfect in this state. Though virtue has the best and vice the worst share on the whole, yet we know that the best men have many afflictions, the worst many enjoyments here. The people of God have noticed this in all ages. We find it com-

plained of by Job and Jeremiah. The Psalmist, in Psalm lxxiii., describes this state of things in affecting terms: he confesses that he was deeply grieved by it, and almost staggered in his faith, "until," says he, "I went into the sanctuary of God, and then I understood the end of the wicked." How many things we witness that cause a revulsion to our moral feelings, and loudly demand correction! When we see the intrigues of guilt prosper, when we contemplate the oppressions of tyrants and the desolations of war, we are ready to cry, "Is there not a God that judgeth the earth?" He may keep silence now, but He is displeased, and will show himself to have been so at last. These can never be supposed the final, the finished results of his providence. Nor can it be admitted that his justice is doubtful; for, besides that this would be taking back the premises before granted, there are evidences that He rewards virtue and punishes vice in the main. Remorse is the appointed portion of the one, calm approbation that of the other. Why, then, does He delay his justice? Delay, let it be answered, is nothing to the Eternal Being. A thousand years with Him are but as a day. All space is his. None can escape from his hand. He has all—at all times, in all places—completely within his reach and power. "He is not slack, as men count slackness, but is long-suffering, and willing that all should repent." Therefore, his perfect justice demands a judgment and a state to come. Nor can we suppose that, without this, He would ever have permitted such unjust afflictions to have befallen the apostle who was reasoning before Felix on this great subject, or those other men who were evidently the faithful and devoted friends of God.

2. Man is naturally created heir to such a state of being. Man has an immaterial, invisible property, a soul, as well as a material, perishable body. This has been the conviction of all the wisest among mankind. The thinking principle—that which we mean when we speak of self, that which we call I—is something that consists of perfect unity and simplicity, something not to be separated into parts like the body. Otherwise, thought must be supposed to arise from the union of the several parts of the body, and every part must have its portion of thought, which is absurd; for then there must be supposed as many centres of thought, as many minds and souls, as there are parts; and thus every individual would contain an infinity of selves within him. The spirit of man is something uncompounded, therefore not destructible—not to be scattered by winds or consumed by flames. No outward force can touch thought, can affect the inward consciousness of guilt or innocence. Spirit naturally ascends to God, the infinite Spirit, the Father of all spirits, as dust naturally returns to dust. If God does not destroy the spirit of his creature, it cannot be destroyed: but what reason can be assigned why He should destroy that which is the chief work of his creative power? What atom of matter did He ever yet annihilate? Is it conceivable, then, that He should annihilate that alone which partakes most of his own nature, and renders the creature capable of an immortal union with himself? Can mind, which is an eternal thing, an

emanation of the Father of spirits, be supposed to perish? No; be assured you are born to immortality as your natural inheritance. Your being, once commenced, must go on forever.

3. Man appears to be the only being on earth to whose nature and faculties his present state is incommensurate. Every other creature completes its destiny, attains the utmost end of its faculties. Man alone is always progressive, interminably advancing in his conceptions and achievements; yet he is always cut off in the midst of his work; he is never permitted to complete a single science. The powers of man tend towards an expansion which they can never here attain. The longer he remains here, the more a just contempt of the present world grows in every noble mind. Brutes are not haunted and disquieted by the desire of an ideal felicity which they cannot find; man only sighs after an image of infinite perfection, that can be realized only in God; aspires to his native skies, with as natural a tendency as that by which the flame ascends. These are traces of his grandeur even in its ruins; indications that humanity was once a temple inhabited by Deity; and they infer the destiny of man to a future state of being.

4. The expectation of such a state has been universal among mankind. Dr. Robertson informs us that nations have been found without an idea of God, but none without an idea of a future state. Now, when any persuasion is found to be universal, we must suppose one or the other of these two things: either that it formed a part of God's original revelation to man, or that it is a part of human nature. In either case it comes from God. But guilt is accompanied with disquietude and alarm, with an awful handwriting on the wall of conscience; none so hardened as he that can wholly shake off the apprehension of a hereafter; a voice within assures us that evil deserves to suffer, and good to rejoice. This law, written on the heart of man, has made even pagans wretched amid grandeur attended by guilt; and the reasoning of Paul was seconded in the mind of Felix by another deeper voice that made him change places with the prisoner before him, and tremble at the judgment to come, even on his judgment-seat.

Let only one improvement suffice. Those who reject revelation gain no advantage for excluding the belief of a future state; they merely involve themselves in deeper darkness and despair. If they could blot out every page of revelation, and consign the name of Jesus Christ to eternal oblivion, the doctrine of man's immortality would still remain; the only difference would be, that the hopes and consolations of the gospel would then be lost. There is an echo, a confirmation, in nature to all that Scripture says in connexion with this momentous theme; a handwriting within, correspondent with that in the page. When it is said, "The wages of sin is death," the consciousness of sin as sin is presupposed; its condemnation is expressed as of an evil already known and allowed. When we hear that "cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the law," it is implied that the curse existed before the law was given, and would have existed had it never been given, being itself the law of nature. But now

the only refuge from that law and its curse is opened by Jesus Christ and his redemption. The way to ruin is manifold and broad: there exists one only narrow way to life eternal. Enter into this way, that you may be saved from the wrath to come! Remember that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God! Let us, therefore, find grace, where all may find it, to serve Him with holy fear; "for our God is a consuming fire."

XL.

CHARACTER OF THE JUDGMENT TO COME.*

HEBREWS, vi., 2: *Eternal judgment.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, May 21, 1826.]

IN the text, "eternal judgment" is ranked among the first principles of religion, in connexion with faith and repentance, the rite of baptism, and the doctrine of the resurrection. In a preceding discourse,† we considered the evidences of reason in favour of a future judgment; we may now present the additional light of Scripture, especially the New Testament, on this great subject.

1. Jesus Christ is declared to be the Judge. This is the doctrine of the whole New Testament. In Matthew, xxv., He himself gives us a full description of the judgment as conducted by the Son of Man, attended by all the holy angels, and seated on the throne of his glory. His apostles reiterated the same truth. In Acts, xvii., Paul informs the Athenians that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world by that Man whom He has ordained, whereof He has given assurance in that He has raised Him from the dead. And elsewhere he writes, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." Hence, it is evident that Jesus Christ is more than a mere man, since the judgment of all involves omniscience, an incommunicable attribute of Deity. At the same time, it appears most proper that Jesus Christ should be the Judge, that He who came to save should be rewarded with the dignity of judging those to whom He came. His mediatorial kingdom cannot be conceived to close in any manner with more majestic decency than by his assigning their eternal destinies to all his subjects.

2. The last judgment is described as being exercised on man in his incarnate state. This circumstance is a pure discovery of revelation; it was utterly unknown to nature. We are taught

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

† See the foregoing sermon.

by Scripture that the dead will be raised, with bodies changed and fitted for that fiery ordeal which they must undergo. In 1 Cor., xv., the apostle says, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall all be changed in a moment at the last trump:" where "the last trump" appears to be that which will change those that remain on earth, after the first trump has raised those that were dead. As the same apostle writes in another place: "We that remain shall not prevent, or precede, those that sleep; the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we that remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord." Two miracles are described: the first, the raising of the dead; the second, the changing of the living. Christianity puts a new dignity even upon the fleshly part of our nature, teaching us that we shall rise with the body, as the companion of the mind, the instrument and partner of its ideas. We shall give an account in the body of the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil. Hence arises a new argument for purity and temperance: "the body being dead because of sin, but quickened by Christ, we are therefore to mortify the deeds of the body," and to regard it as "the temple of God." The body is for the Lord. "

3. We learn from Scripture that the judgment of all will be simultaneous: all will be judged together. This, also, is a circumstance for which we are indebted solely to revelation. Reason might probably have supposed that every one would be judged separately at the time of his death. But God has reasons for a public judgment: God must not only do right, but be known to do right. Though every one at death enters the region either of happiness or despair, yet it is fit there should be a day, prefigured by the day of visitation at the deluge, at Sodom, and at Jerusalem; a day for the gathering of all men to their own class, as either righteous or wicked. This arrangement, if not necessary, is expedient for the illustration of the Divine justice; thus all may be convinced of the fitness, not only of their own retribution, but of that of others also. The day thus designated signifies a portion of duration set apart for this purpose, for which one might suppose an eternity would scarcely be too great, when we consider the immensity of the subject and the multitude of the persons concerned: but we must recollect that God can in a moment let in such light as would equal what, according to our present ideas, it would require eternity to disclose; just as our Saviour could, in a few moments, impress on the woman of Samaria such a sense of his omniscience, that she went away declaring, "He had told her all that ever she did," and demanded, "Is not this the Christ?" Thus God can make men retrace all the past at once, and set all their misdeeds and secret sins in the light of his countenance. "

4. This judgment will be greatly modified by the gospel. Men will be judged, not as innocent or guilty, but as believers or unbelievers: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth

not shall be damned." With respect to the heathen, they that sinned without law, as the apostle tells us, Rom., ii., will be judged without law; they will be treated according to the light of natural conscience. But *we* shall be treated as those who were placed under the gospel, those who were called by God to repentance and faith. To *us* the terms of probation are changed; the aspect of eternity is altered: to *us* the terms of the present gospel are those of the last judgment. "The word that I speak," says Jesus Christ, "the same shall judge every man at the last day." He that is now in a state of condemnation, and departs in that state as defined by the gospel, will be condemned at the last day, and he that is justified now will be justified then. The law must stop every mouth, and bring in all the world guilty before God. The question with every one here is, Have you repented? Have you by faith received Jesus Christ, and returned by Him to God? By this standard your relation to God will be decided for eternity. This is the condemning circumstance, that men believe not the gospel, that they neglect the great salvation. Those who reject Christ are remanded and abandoned to the law of nature; with regard to such, "justice will be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." Now God pleads with us, now He condescends to entreat us to be reconciled to himself through his dear Son. Behold, now is the accepted time! Let none of us neglect it, nor, by such a neglect, incur a double fall—a fall at once from our original and from our second Head!

5. This judgment is final; emphatically the last judgment, from which there can be no appeal: as the text calls it, "eternal judgment." It is universal in its extent, not only with respect to persons, but to the duration of its effects also; it extends to all the destinies of infinite duration; all powers and possibilities of body and soul. "The wicked shall go into eternal fire, the righteous into life eternal." The same word is used, in both the clauses of the original, to express the duration of the punishment or the reward. It is appointed to man, as once to die, so after death to be judged once for all: and no wonder, when we recollect that this judgment introduces a new universe: new heavens and earth are prepared to succeed to it; therefore we may well expect it to be a judgment adequate to the utmost grasp of hope or fear.

6. Lastly, it is represented as a sudden event. Images and expressions of suddenness are accumulated on this subject in Scripture. As a snare shall that day come upon all; as travail upon a woman; as a thief in the night; like the deluge on the generation of Noah; like the fire from heaven on the men of Sodom. "When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" Shall He find men looking for his appearance? Alas! He will rather find the multitude saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Men will be buying and selling, building and planting, burying their hearts in earthly things, when

the earth, the scene of their anxiety, will be melting away beneath them! Men will be hurrying to strife and battle, when the very stage of their contention will be rent in sunder by the last convulsions of nature! When the din of arms shall be silenced by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God! Men will be meditating iniquity, when the day of judgment overtakes them unprepared! It is when the earth shall be ripe for the vintage of wrath, that the order will be suddenly given, "Thrust in thy sickle and reap!"

The Judge is even now silently coming in the day of death to every individual. Who, then, is seriously prepared for that day of his coming? There are some such wise and happy persons, living even now in the light of eternity, living in a constant respect to the recompenses of the unseen world, living in a course of wisdom which all the revolutions of futurity will confirm; all others are guilty of an infatuation, incalculable, irreparable! forgetful of the truth, that "as it is appointed to all men once to die, so after death is the judgment."

XLI.

REMEMBRANCE IN YOUTH OF JUDGMENT TO COME.*

Ecclesiastes, xi., 9: *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, January 6, 1828. Half-yearly address to young persons.]

The season of youth is peculiarly attractive to every benevolent observer. Our Lord showed a tender regard for the young; and, as He once looked upon an amiable youth, is said to have loved him. In a more important view, the young are the hope of the world; they appear as objects of much attention in Scripture: this book of Ecclesiastes, in particular, is chiefly addressed to them. "Wherewithal," asks the Psalmist, "shall a young man cleanse his way?" and he gives it as a question which admits but of one answer: "by taking heed to himself according to thy word."

I. We shall spend a few words in establishing the true interpretation of the text. This book is often obscure, by its abrupt transitions. Two interpretations have been proposed for the passage before us.

1. It has been viewed by some as grave advice: as though its

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

purport were, "youth is the time for gayety, within the bounds of moderation; a certain decorum attends every age; there is a becoming grace and spirit in the gayety of youth; let it be indulged only in consistency with the remembrance of God and judgment."

2. But to this interpretation it is objected, by others, that the terms used are too broad and large to allow of this passage being applied in such a serious meaning. The expression, "walk in the ways of thy heart," is never in the Scriptures used in a good, but always in an evil sense: as when Moses (Deut., xxix.) warns the Israelite against saying, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." So Jeremiah (chapter vii.) speaks of the people "walking in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart." This is not the style of Scripture in speaking of innocent vivacity and pure enjoyment.

Besides which, in the next words, opening the next chapter, Solomon urges the remembrance of God in the days of youth—a very different advice from that of walking in the ways of the heart: so that there is a want of consistency, in the interpretation objected to, with the connexion in which it occurs. Hence it appears almost certain that the preacher meant to say, "Although the young man might thus walk in the ways of his own vain desires, yet let him remember God and judgment, and be induced rather to cultivate early piety." The language in the former part of the sentence is merely ironical.

II. We may now proceed to enforce and illustrate this solemn warning. The heart of youth, if it goes in its own way, must go in a way full of moral disorder. Even if disgrace before men is escaped, there will be infinity of evil before God—neglect of God, of prayer, of self-examination, of Scripture. But can it be safe to act as if there were no God? to live in an ungrateful disregard to that Great Being who is ever present with us; who has stamped mementoes of himself on all about us; who has revealed himself to us in his own word; who has opened a stupendous way of approach to himself, in the divinity, the doctrine, the character, the death, the resurrection, and intercession of Jesus Christ? As in darkness deeds of evil abound, so in such a state of living without God in the world, vices are most likely to luxuriate—duties sure to be neglected: "the whole head will be found sick, the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even to the head there will be no sound part; but wounds, bruises, putrifying sores, neither closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment." So much ingratitude and apostacy is there in neglect of God, that a day of judgment is appointed for its punishment. With respect to this judgment, remember,

1. Its extent. "All these things" are involved in it. Many of our actions are forgotten by ourselves, not by our Judge; their traces are worn out, not washed out; they will one day rise up in all

their first freshness; you will be compelled to trace your former selves, and read your past history. There will be a manifestation of all hearts and all their secrets.

2. The character of the Judge. Before a judge of our own nature, the criminal shrinks: then the Divine Being will be the Judge; Jesus Christ will sit on the throne: "every eye shall see him!" What a day will that be, when God will judge you! It may be easy to disregard it, while He hides himself and keeps silence; but then He will be all in all—the great and only reality!

3. The severity of this judgment. God is now merciful; He deals with us now through the mediation of the Saviour; but his mercy is limited to time; then He will have judgment without mercy; justice alone will hold the scales; God will meet sinners in the majesty of infinite holiness and wisdom—in a character most awfully severe: his condemnation will dry up all the sources of hope and good; his sentence, "Depart, ye cursed," will be the entrance into an eternity of wo.

4. This judgment will be final and ultimate. With men there is often a higher court of appeal, to which the condemned may resort; but this is emphatically called "*eternal judgment.*" Some, indeed, imagine a release; but the Scriptures know of no such state: they confine all our hope to the present life; they represent this as the only state of probation. "When once the Master has sat down!" How awful to sink where we can never rise again! if filthy, to be filthy still! if separate from God, to remain so still, forever!

5. The last thing regarding this judgment is its *certainty.* "God *will* bring thee into judgment." Heaven and earth may pass away, and shall; but not a word of God can fail. As sure as death is appointed unto all, is judgment also. From the first, Enoch proclaimed it: "God shall come with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment on all; and to convince all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds and words." Paul called upon all men to "repent, because God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world. He made it the first theme of his ministry. Jesus Christ described it fully in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew. The whole New Testament is replete with the doctrine: "We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."

The remembrance of this great truth will have a most favourable influence on your present as well as future state. How much the fear of death and judgment imbitters existence to many, and renders their whole life an elaborate expedient of forgetfulness—an attempt to escape from thought to trifles, to hide serious objects from their view! There is a handwriting of conscience on the wall, that scares them inwardly: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting!"

Never, my dear young friends, will you be delivered from such a state, never will you attain true peace, until you acquaint your-

selves with God! His ways alone are the ways of peace. How often have those that seemed to be the most gay confessed, when they became religious, that they were, before, the most wretched; as Colonel Gardiner declared that, amid all the prosperity of his vicious career, he had often envied the existence of a dog! Have you never known what bitterness is attached to forgetfulness of God? And what a wretch must he be who cannot bear to converse with himself—to whose peace it is essential that he should expunge from his thoughts his soul and his Maker, as an encumbrance and a nuisance!

Will you lose any thing by religion? will it not favour you in a temperate pursuit of business and pleasure, and keep you from a thousand injuries? In the Bible you will find, not a melancholy and terrifying intelligence, but a discovery of the only happy God, as the Father who would gather his straying children by his Son, their Saviour. Be assured, the very sorrows and severities of religion only prepare the way for its blessings. Come, then, to God, by Jesus Christ, and you shall find rest. "The Spirit and the bride say, come; and let him that heareth, say come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him come, and partake of the water of life freely!"

XLII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PREFERENCE OF HEAVENLY RICHES.*

HEBREWS, X., 34: *For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*

[Preached at Bridge-street, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, August 8, 1824.]

IT is a mark of the true religion, by which it is distinguished from false systems, that from the first it has met with opposition and persecution. False religions have risen and grown up in silence; they disturbed no prepossessions, and thwarted no passions of mankind; they were congenial with the tempers, manners, and pleasures of the age. The religion of Christ had a different reception; contradicting human nature in so many ways, it became from the first an object of hostility; and the prediction of its author was amply verified, that his disciples should be "hated of all men for his name's sake." The first persecutors that appeared against the apostles were the Jews; the record of their opposition is given in the New Testament. It is probable that, but for them, Christianity might have escaped in that age, and have been confounded with Judaism, which was tolerated as one among the superstitions of the empire. Influenced, probably, by

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

this hope, and willing to give themselves every advantage with the Jews as well as pagans, the primitive Christians conformed, as far as they allowably could, to the Jewish rites, and made as gentle a transition as possible from the Mosaic to the Christian mode of worship, retaining for a time, from prudential motives, several of their former peculiarities. But the Jews were not to be thus pacified: at Thessalonica, Berea, Philippi, and other places, they excited the pagan magistrates to sanction a persecution of the new sect, which they hoped to crush in its infancy. The Epistle to the Hebrews, addressed chiefly to Christians converted from Judaism, is full of consolations adapted to persons placed in such afflicting circumstances. In no part of Scripture are the powerful and exalted comforts of the gospel more copiously applied. And these animating views are of perpetual and universal value. Though the circumstances of the Church, in the present age, are widely different from those here adverted to, who does not perceive that the instructions and admonitions given by the apostle must be highly beneficial in every case of trial? Indeed, we must make it our constant object to regulate our sentiments and our conduct, on every occasion, by the maxims and examples presented in Scripture.

I proceed to call your attention, first, to the particular trial, as mentioned in the text, which those early Christians sustained; secondly, to the temper of mind with which they received it; and, in the third and last place, to the conviction and hope by which they were supported under it.

I. With respect to the first point; the trial they were called to endure, mentioned in the text, was imprisonment and the spoliation of their property. It is unnecessary to say that these are great afflictions. You can all understand the misery that must attach to the violent invasion of your freedom and of your possessions. You know that such are among the heaviest sufferings, of an external kind, that human nature can experience; and that they require the highest degree of fortitude to sustain them with patience. But these were, in all probability, very frequent sufferings among those first disciples of Christ. Those who were so commonly martyred would be continually subjected to bonds and rapine. Persecutors, who did not stop at the lives, would never spare the possessions, of their victims: especially when we recollect that, in acting thus, they were impelled by two powerful incitements at once: they gratified their hatred of the religion, while they indulged their desire of plunder: what was lost by one party, would be so much gain to the other; and, no doubt, multitudes grew rich by this authorized rapacity. When Christianity began to attract the attention of the civil power, and became the subject of laws and edicts, a system of confiscation was enacted. It may be said, indeed, that the amount of the property thus sacrificed was not great in proportion to the number of the sufferers; since the Christians of the first age were in general of the poorer and humbler class: but if many were poor, some also were rich; and let it be remembered that even where the loss was smaller, the sacrifice was

really as great; the difference was to the gainers, not to the sufferers; the poor man could only lose his all; and he would feel his privation the more deeply, as that little all was the hard and slow earning of his labour, the accumulation of industrious years. This, then, is the evil to which the text alludes.

II. In the next place, I notice the temper of mind with which this trial was sustained; this is expressed by the apostle in two points of view: "Ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods." "Ye had compassion of me:" he does not mean to say, merely, that they pitied him, sympathizing as silent spectators of his afflictions; but he means that they were actual fellow-sufferers, and sharers with himself of the same calamities: "ye felt the same that I felt, by your own similar experience." They exhibited a Christian generosity, crowned with a divine devotion; they remembered their fellow-sufferers, and forgot their own sufferings. And, what is much more remarkable, "ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods." Simply to acquiesce unmurmuring in such a dispensation of Providence as this; not to be driven by it to dissemble; not to flinch from an honourable adherence to truth, might have been thought all that could be expected of human nature. But "joyfully" to meet the severest of circumstantial distresses, rendered the more severe by its cruel injustice, this is an elevation which Christian piety only can ascend! It will be allowed by all that this was at least a very singular temper. When the harvest is suddenly blasted, which has been reared with long care and toil, the utmost we expect in the labourer is patient resignation; no one for a moment thinks of joy. A degree of attachment to property is the dictate of nature and reason; and it is accompanied with the most beneficial influences; it operates as an incentive to industry and invention; it gives life and energy to society, which would sink (without that stimulus) into perfect languor and indolence: where nations have attained a high state of power and refinement, the passion for wealth has often become so strong that, in the ardour of acquiring and accumulating new possessions, national avarice has too frequently trampled upon justice, and forgotten the sanctity of its professed religion. This shows that the loss of wealth is considered by mankind as a loss of the first magnitude; and this, because wealth is the principal instrument of commanding all things besides. How, then, did these first converts to the gospel come to take thus joyfully the spoiling of their goods? How are we to account for so strange a feature of character, such an utter reversal of our nature? This leads me to notice, in the third place,

III. The principle which cherished and maintained this divine temper: "knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance;" not taking this prospect upon probable testimony, but relying on it as a certain reality, a matter of the firmest conviction. Those early believers in Christ had not merely heard the doctrine of immortality and heaven; its anticipation lived and glowed in their hearts; they tasted by their faith the powers of the world to come; they realized an invisible and eternal state of bliss, in

the presence of God and Christ, of angels and their departed brethren; the hope of heaven was enthroned in their souls; displacing every temporal, transient, sensible object from its hold upon the affections; eclipsing the glories of the present world; and absorbing the whole mind in love to God; desire of his favour and felicity; a holy longing to be found in Christ, clothed with his righteousness, and filled with his Spirit! They felt within themselves (as the apostle implies) the fullest evidence and demonstration of their eternal prospects; they felt their close alliance to God and heaven: his love was shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit which He had given them, and made them, amid all their tribulations, rejoice in the hope of the glory of God! They had no need of any one to assure them of their blessed destiny; no need of arguments to convince them of its reality: Christ within them was the hope of glory; the sense of God's love reigned in their souls, producing a joy far above the world, alike above either its joys or its sorrows! They fed upon the hidden manna; they possessed the new name which no man knoweth but he that receives it; they were placed above all earthly trials!

The treasure which they anticipated in heaven, and of which the clear anticipation raised them so high above mortality, is described by the apostle in two characteristics: as "better," and as "enduring."

1. In how many respects this heavenly substance is "better" than any that is of an earthly nature, the time would fail me to point out; and, after all, our views of its superior excellence must be extremely inadequate and obscure. But,

(1.) It is better, in as much as earthly substance is merely the instrument of enjoyment; while heaven is enjoyment itself, essential felicity. The very name of wealth, which the apostle here employs, "substance,"* can be applied to temporal property merely in an accommodated meaning; it is strictly applicable only to celestial riches. Besides which, the instrument itself is uncertain in the success of its operation; it often fails; the greatest riches are unable always to purchase enjoyment or ease; there are cases in which no wealth can obtain a drop of water to cool the tongue tormented with thirst, or prevent the horrors of famine: cases, how many, in which the state of the mind or the body may frustrate all the powers of opulence. But heaven, my brethren, is not an instrument of fruition; heaven is a state, an element of full, permanent, ineffable, and absolute joy, in the immediate presence of the Father of spirits, in the light of the Divine countenance, at the fountain of all beatitude, the river of eternal pleasures, the fulness of uncreated bliss! As divines are accustomed to say that intuitive knowledge, which instantly perceives its objects without a dilatory process of induction, is preferable to the gradual perception of truth, as attained through a chain of reasoning; so to possess happiness as a state, to live in it as an element, is preferable to a condition in which happiness is attained by instruments. So much better is the "substance" of heaven than that of earth.

* ὑπαρξις, *essentia*.

(2.) Again: earthly objects have no power to satisfy the mind; they cannot tranquillize the heart: on the contrary, by an unhappy tendency, they enlarge the desires which they gratify; they inflame the passions which they indulge; nor can they ever fill the vast vacuity which they are condemned to leave in an immortal mind. In their pursuit, the pleasure is allayed with much intermingling pain: the care of acquiring and keeping wealth is allowed by all to be full of anxiety. But the enjoyments of eternity are of another nature; they satisfy the soul: from the moment of death or the resurrection, the spirit of the saint is placed in a state of complete felicity: no longing to rise higher is admitted in that state, nor the least apprehension of declining from the present height: the dominion of uncertainty and change is forever left behind: it is a happiness fixed as the eternal heaven in which it dwells; consummated by the certainty that it is allotted to its possessor never to be recalled! an eternal increase of enjoyment, which some have supposed, enters not (I confess) into my conception of heaven: we cannot but regard it as a state, from the first entrance, of complete satisfaction.

(3.) Earthly treasure can only enable its possessor to surround himself with superfluous pomp, to "walk in a vain show:" it can only gratify the taste and imagination, or catch the applause of the multitude: it has no power to come into contact with the soul; none to calm the perturbations of conscience, heal the corrosions of remorse, or give comfort to the dying bed: wealth cannot meet the requisitions of the heart, it cannot impart purity to the affections; it can shed no mental grace or joy, nor let in the light of hope upon eternity; it leaves the mind as exposed as ever to all the terrors of judgment and the wrath of God! But heavenly riches illuminate the understanding, pacify the conscience, and fill the heart with unutterable joy. "The good man is satisfied from himself;" he is admitted to the communion of saints and angels; he dwells in love, he dwells in God, and God in him!

(4.) The wealth of this world can never, by its nature, become truly our own. We may identify ourselves with it, and seem as if we were enlarged by our possession; but this is merely a fiction of the imagination: we must at least shrink back into our proper selves, and feel that our possessions are utterly separate from our souls. Whatever our circumstances, we are left unaltered in our moral state, our spiritual reality. But the riches of eternity are part of ourselves; they may be said to enter within the veil, into the hidden man of the heart: they qualify us to become habitations of God, by his Spirit: knowing (as it is read by some) "that in yourselves you have a better substance."

2. In the next place, this is also an enduring substance. Temporal wealth (as you need scarcely be reminded) is extremely transient. The rich man never knows how soon the voice may be heard, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" But he that is not rich unto God can retain nothing after death, to protect or sustain him in the presence of his Judge: he must depart from all his possessions

and all his pomp as naked as the meanest beggar; he must go, in solitude, divested of all he had except his soul, through the dark valley; he must pass into the eternal world, a disimbodied spirit, fixed in its unchangeable destiny of bliss or wo—stamped either with the image of God or the image of Satan! He must leave his splendid mansion and equipage behind; bid adieu to his groves and lawns, and the shades under which he reposed; and carry nothing with him, perhaps, but the guilty and the bitter recollection of having abused his earthly grandeur! What a fall from the pinnacle of prosperity to the bottomless abyss, the living fire, the never-dying worm! But the good man carries away with him his heavenly substance, retains the acquisitions of piety, riches of a kindred nature to the treasures of heaven: his seed was sown to the Spirit, and, in that spiritual world, he reaps the fruit, even life everlasting—his spirituality, his love and devotion to God, and to the blessed Redeemer, qualify him to breathe the element of immortality—to enjoy the incorruptible inheritance reserved for him in heaven. Those primitive Christians, addressed in the text, have now for eighteen hundred years been partaking of the heavenly substance, with no decay of delight, and with a clear prospect of perpetual fruition; their felicity is the same as at the first moment.

Let me briefly add, as an improvement of the subject, two or three practical reflections.

1. How much we are indebted to God for that kind of evidence of Christianity, which arises from the sufferings of its first disciples! That Divine religion was attested, indeed, by the ample and triumphant evidence of miracles; but we do not behold those miracles; we believe the record concerning them, and the principal evidence of that record's veracity lies in the character and sufferings of the witnesses. Under the conviction of the reality of those miraculous powers which they had seen, and which they themselves exhibited, they proclaimed to the world the amazing history and doctrine of their Divine Master; and, in spite of imprisonment and spoliation, with the terror of a cruel martyrdom before their eyes, they persisted in bearing the same invariable testimony. "We cannot (they said) but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Nothing of the kind ever accompanied the rise and spread of a false religion. Nothing of the kind can be conceived to take place, while human nature remains the same, without the basis of reality for a testimony so requited! We are reduced to the simple alternative of supposing either that human nature, in those first Christian sufferers, was not what it has ever been before or since, but had undergone some strange and unaccountable revolution; or that theirs was a true record—that the hand of God was indeed outstretched to sustain his infant Church; that the gospel was proved to be that revelation of God which it professes to be; and that they had the best reason to know whom they had believed. Unless we can suppose them to have acted upon principles utterly different from all other men, they must have been impelled by facts, such as they relate, to testify those facts to the world in defiance of such accumu-

lated sufferings. Viewed in any other light, their conduct is inexplicable, and becomes itself a greater miracle than any which they have recorded.

2. How ought we to magnify that almighty grace which enabled them to suffer! How glorious the genius of Christianity which could produce such examples of moral heroism! What a divine force over the mind does that religion possess, which could render its disciples triumphant over the world and themselves, and more than conquerors, because of the truth! What an example was thus given of the reality of religion! What an evidence that it is no enthusiastic delusion—no visionary speculation; that truly it is "not in word, but in deed, in demonstration of the Spirit and of power!" capable of reversing and transforming nature—of producing joy in the midst of suffering, exaltation in the midst of contempt! The true religion, my brethren, is nothing less than an affiance of the soul to God, an intimate and ineffable union of the human spirit with the Divinity; the soul that is impregnated with it has the seed of God within itself, and is truly "born of God." It is no sublime theory, false to our experience; but "behold, it makes all things new!" It opens waters in the thirsty desert—imparts exultation in the hour of death—causes Paul and Silas, though loaded with irons, to charm the watches of the night with hymns of praise. It opens a glimpse of heaven to the martyr's eye, and enables Stephen to behold Jesus standing at the right hand of God. It inspires the apostles not merely with patience amid suffering, but even with triumph; "they rejoice in tribulation also;" "they rejoiced that they were counted worthy not only to believe, but also to *suffer* for his name." The sufferings of Christ had consecrated sufferings to their hearts: they learned to regard their afflictions as tokens of their Divine adoption, and objects of their sacred ambition! "for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?"

3. And, lastly, let us apply their example for our own improvement. Let us also, my brethren, be anxious to imbibe the same spirit, and act this distinguished part of our religion. Remember that Christians are called to be separate in their character from the men of this world: "the people shall dwell alone." In former times they were signalized by patience: this is not so much the Christian grace peculiarly called into exercise by the present circumstances of the Church: it is now that piety must rise above the world in a holy superiority to its alluring pleasures. The circumstances of the Christian profession vary; but Christian spirit is the same in every age: there must be the same essential feature of character in all the servants of God, amid all their diversified experience in passing through this world to heaven: and that feature is spirituality. Never for a moment imagine that, because you are not persecuted like the early Christians, because you are not thrown into bonds, or spoiled of your goods, for the sake of religion, you are therefore permitted to dispense with the same vital principle of character which inspired their joyful reception of those afflictions. You must have the same decided preference of a heavenly to an earthly inheritance—the same faith mighty

to overcome either the temptations of the world, or its terrors; you must hold the same spiritual contact with God, with Jesus Christ, and the glory to be revealed; you must be influenced, in your heart and conduct, by the same supreme attachment to the LORD, as your portion, your end, your incomparable felicity. And now, my dear brethren, what danger there is, that, amid the smooth and alluring aspect of the age, amid an easy profession, surrounded by the smiles and accommodations of the world, you should lose that vital, that unchangeable, indispensable feature of Christianity—to be, not of the world, not conformed to its spirit, but transformed by the renewing of your mind! You may taste of its passing comforts, you may receive with gratitude the varied and delightful bounties which an indulgent Providence pours around your path; but if you suffer your heart to be engrossed by secular emoluments or enjoyments—if you seek any other object before the favour of God and eternal life, through Jesus Christ, you must be content to HAVE your portion here, and hereafter expect only the bitter remembrance of a heaven which was once abundantly proposed to your acceptance, but which you closed against your own soul! While, then, you rejoice in exemption from sufferings for the gospel's sake, and in the external tranquillity of the Church, "rejoice with trembling," and see that you use the world as not abusing it. Since "God, who in times past addressed the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son; we ought to give the more earnest heed to these things, lest at any time we let them slip, lest any of us should seem to come short of the promised rest; for how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

It is not enough that you hear of these things; that you feel a transient charm and admiration while you listen to the tidings: you must pray, you must watch and strive, with persevering earnestness, that you may not be deceived and seduced by the snares and temptations that surround you; that you may manifest and maintain the character of strangers and pilgrims on earth, who seek a better country. You must be able to say, with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? there is none upon earth I desire in comparison with Thee. As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

XLIII.

REASONS FOR SEEKING THE THINGS ABOVE.*

COLOSSIANS, iii., 1: *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, Nov. 11, 1827.]

THE resurrection of Christ is to be regarded as not only the great proof of his religion, but also the great source of support and consolation to his followers. The apostles use it not only in the former view, as the groundwork of their faith and preaching—"if Christ is not risen, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins"—but also as a powerful motive to a holy and heavenly life: "buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye are also risen with Him." They represent believers as virtually partakers of the exaltation of their Saviour; as "quickened together with Christ, and raised, and made to sit together with Him in heavenly places." "If ye then be risen," or, as it might be rendered, "since ye then are risen with Christ;" he appeals to them upon their own profession: it gives us an advantage to argue with any one on his own premises: they acknowledged Christ risen as the first-fruits of his followers; they wished, as believers, to rise in spirit after Him. He speaks, therefore, in the judgment of charity to them, as persons of this character, and urges them, in consistency with it, to "seek the things which are above."

1. "The things which are above" form the proper object of our regard—the natural element of a Christian's contemplations and affections. Every person should attend to the things which most nearly relate to his own home: but the home of a Christian is above; there is his domestic state, "his Father's house;" there Christ, his elder Brother, is gone before to prepare a place for the family of God. What is the gospel but a revelation of immortality, the promise of a heavenly and eternal life? Christians are, therefore, called "partakers of the heavenly calling." "Our conversation," our citizenship and state, "is in heaven." There Christ sits at the right hand of God. Christ has nothing to do with this world, except with that portion of it which He calls and sanctifies for himself, or as He governs the world by his providence. All his pursuits, desires, and joys, are above this world; they are all placed in heaven: and his people should, therefore, "seek the things which are above."

2. These things are the object for which man is by his nature made, and especially for which he is prepared in his sanctified character.

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

(1.) By the natural constitution of his mind, man requires an object of a spiritual and eternal kind. Nothing of a worldly nature, however multiplied, is congenial with the tendencies and desires of the immortal spirit. Other creatures may be satisfied with things of the earth, but man is a breath of the Almighty; "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of God giveth him understanding;" he feels that he requires something beyond this world to make him happy.

(2.) Much more, the Christian, as renewed in his spirit by the power of God and the hope of the gospel, must "seek the things above," as alone suited to his soul. Spirituality is the essence of the Christian; he breathes and tends heavenward: he is dead, dead to the world before he dies out of it, and his life is hidden with Christ in God.

3. The transcendent excellence of "the things above" is a third reason why we should seek them. There all is perfection; all is holiness and happiness. The saints even here have ever found their holiest, their happiest hours; they have tasted unspeakable pleasures in communion with God; they have given their testimony in dying hours to the fulness of joy which is experienced in converse with heaven; but these anticipations are as nothing in comparison with that exceeding glory which awaits them where they stand before God, and drink of the pure river of pleasures that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb: they are there with Christ, and behold his glory according to his own desire: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; and the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." They never cease from the praises of their God!

With regard to the circumstances of "the things above," there are inconceivable glories in the heavenly world. God displays his power and glory through all his works; but there is a place where He more especially dwells and manifests himself, and this is the third heaven. Whatever can render it a scene worthy of the majesty of God, worthy of the infinite merit and purchase of the Son of God, worthy of the most enlarged desires and hopes of the redeemed—all is collected and perfect there. When Christ had finished his work by his death, that was the place of glory to which He was exalted as the reward for his suffering: this gives us an idea what must be the glory of that world above!

4. The perpetuity of "the things which are above" presents a fourth consideration why we should seek them. The smallest good, of a lasting duration, is deemed preferable to a much greater benefit that is only transient. But the things which are not seen are eternal; and though God alone is eternal in all respects, as alone inhabiting the eternity that is past, alone "from everlasting," yet He has been pleased to communicate a duration like his own to the felicity in reserve for his people: theirs, in

its duration, is the felicity of God, and coeternal with his throne! He has invested them with a glorious incapacity of dying, and reserved an eternal weight of glory for those who were once the dwellers in these tents of wo! It is an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away. "I give unto My sheep eternal life; they shall never perish; nor shall any being pluck them out of My hand." And once more,

5. We should seek "the things above," because there is the certainty of success assured to all that seek them in the right way. In the pursuit of all earthly objects of desire there is no certainty of attainment, even to those who have used every endeavour; there is so much casualty, so many things over which we can have no foresight or control, that the most ardent and skilful votaries of wealth or honour may as often fail as succeed. The great prizes of the world have often fallen into the lap of folly, while they have eluded the grasp of talent and perseverance. The battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift, nor riches to men of understanding; though this may be generally the case. But with regard to celestial good, the object infinitely more valuable than all besides, and with regard to this alone, every one that seeks it, if he seeks it lawfully, and according to the terms of the pursuit, shall certainly attain. It is true that those who seek it in any other way of their own choosing, like self-righteous or Antinomian abusers of grace, shall fall short at last. But the way is so plainly marked out to us, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein; and whoever follows after "heavenly things" in that way, shall gain the prize which he seeks. Other elevations are slippery and precarious; this, which so far surpasses all the rest, is safe and sure to him who aspires to reach it: it is an elevation ever united with humility; in proportion as we "seek the things above," and rise in spirit heavenward, we shall be abased in our own sight, and lie prostrate in the dust! The vanities of this life may or may not be won, but the great things of eternity—God, and glory, and heavenly happiness—are the certain inheritance of all that steadfastly set their faces thitherward. "If thou incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thy heart to understanding; if thou cry after knowledge, if thou search for her as hidden treasure, then shalt thou find the knowledge of God." Wisdom is represented as saying, "They that seek me early shall find me."

What reasons, then, exist, my dear brethren, why we should seek these things, and seek them with increased earnestness! The apostle who wrote the text affords a striking example of the manner in which we should seek them. He was converted, it is true, miraculously, and in a moment; but did he the less, for that reason, exert himself in the pursuit of heaven? "Forgetting," says he, "the things which are behind, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling." "Brethren," says he, "I count not myself to have apprehended; but I press on, if

by any means I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended; if by any means I may apprehend it!" "I," says he again, "so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one who beats the air." "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward;" and remember, "we are then made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end: he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

And, besides this, consider that the reasons for thus "seeking the things which are above" are always growing stronger than before; every moment is impairing the lustre and the value of every thing in which we can be interested here below; every moment our tenure of it is wasting away; while every moment is adding, as it were, to the nearness and importance of eternal things: "It is now high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." The partition is extremely thin that separates us from the other world, and it is growing perpetually thinner; some of us may almost be said to have looked through it already, and had a glimpse of the things within the veil! The resurrection of the dead, the great white throne, the opening of the books, and all the awful solemnities of that world, how near they are to us all! And shall any of us, my brethren, if we are Christians, be found neglecting the things which are our proper, our domestic concern? To bear that name, and yet neglect the things above; live without spirituality; suppress the spirit of prayer; have our hearts buried in the present vain world, is a perfect mockery of our profession, a contradiction to all we avow, a self-delusion that must end in ruin. And this is the destructive sin, this is the wearing, wasting malady of so many who call themselves Christians, that at the same time their hearts are set upon this world, they are carnally-minded, which is death, not spiritually-minded, which is life and peace. "Finally, my brethren, the time is short. It remains that they that weep should be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that possess, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it, as those who remember that the fashion of this world passeth away."

XLIV.

HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS.*

COLOSSIANS, iii., 2: *Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, October 5, 1828.]

THIS epistle was evidently written to check some of those evils into which the church at Colosse had fallen, and particularly their fond adherence to abrogated rites and ceremonies. Its tendency is obvious—to restore them to a just sense of the superior value of their privileges. Instead of going back to an antiquated economy, the apostle directs them to elevate their views to that illustrious dispensation founded by Christ Jesus, which is so calculated to raise their affections to the celestial world.

By "things above" we are clearly to understand things in heaven. Heaven is always spoken of as above us, partly owing to our relative situation on the earth, and partly to express its superiority. When John speaks of Christ, it is "*He that cometh from above;*" and he interprets this term by a subsequent remark: "*He that cometh from above is above all.*" Thus we are not only taught his heavenly nature, but his transcendent superiority. Thus the text, speaking of *things above*, points us to heaven as the place where they are, and intimates, by the same phrase, their great superiority.

In a former passage, the church at Colosse is exhorted to "*seek those things which are above;*" in the passage before us, the *manner* of seeking them is made known. We are to have them in our hearts; they are to be objects of affection; they are to be sought after with an intense desire. There are some persons who would exclude the exercise of the affections from religion. But to do so, would be to exclude all that is excellent in the compassion and mercy of God, and whatever is melting in the love of Christ. We should be left, by such a process, with a fleeting shadow instead of an invaluable substance—with a lifeless skeleton instead of an animated body.

The exhortation before us is founded on the fact that temporal objects have greater power over us than those which are eternal; and on the stronger desire to possess the visible things of time, rather than the invisible realities of eternity.

But why are *things above* to be sought after? What is there in those objects to demand the exercise of an intense and holy desire? A solution of these inquiries will justify and enforce the exhortation of the text.

I. Things above are transcendently excellent.

* Reported in the Evangelist.

They are not to be compared with any material object. They are *heavenly*, and therefore we consider them more excellent than the highest forms of earthly good. Heaven is God's throne—the earth is his footstool. Not that this world is destitute of the most vivid expressions of the glory of the Divine Being; but the heavenly regions alone are irradiated by the display of his visible glory.

They are elevated far above temporal good; they are more difficult to be comprehended. "*Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath laid up for them that love him.*" If there be such a place as heaven, who can doubt, after such a statement, its vast superiority?

The Apostle John, when living an exile amid the solitudes of Patmos, had a vision of the heavenly world, and beheld some of its glories. Yet he afterward declared, "*It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is.*" When heaven has, in any way, been partially opened to mortal vision, the impressions made by its glory have been deep and lasting.

Angels have sometimes visited our world in a visible form. Though they brought with them only a few beams of that glory which *fills* heaven, their presence has always been insupportable. Manoah, when he saw the angel ascend in the flame of the sacrifice, said to his wife, "*We shall die, for we have seen God.*" When John, in the visions of the Apocalypse, saw the Redeemer, with whom, in the days of his flesh, he maintained the closest friendship, he could not endure the brightness of his glory, but "*fell at his feet as dead.*" If such be the overpowering effect attending these distant and imperfect glimpses of heaven, how glorious must be the things that are in it—how happy and joyful an abode for the humble Christian!

It can occasion no surprise that we are destined to undergo a mighty change ere we can enter into heaven. "*Behold,*" says the apostle, "*I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*"

And if you consider its dignities and enjoyments, you will discover another proof of their high excellence. They consist partly in being made like unto God, and having his Divine image indelibly impressed on the heart—to see Him face to face—to resemble Christ—to have angels for our associates—to bear, not the image of the first Adam, but the "*second Adam, which is the Lord from heaven.*" To enjoy such dignities—to engage in the employments which are necessarily connected with them—give to those celestial things a transcendent excellence.

For what so great or good as to be like God? What so happy as eternal union with Christ? What so honourable as the association with the highest and holiest intelligences? What so full of enjoyment, of the most pure and elevated order, as the pleas-

ures flowing from such sources? Can any precept be more proper than the one contained in these words? And does not this transcendent excellence render *things above* suitable objects of intense desire?

II. Things above are satisfying, and exactly suited to our nature.

The highest forms of earthly good are only suited to us in a very subordinate sense. They are "*of the earth, earthy.*" But the soul of man being immortal, naturally seeks after purer and higher joys than earth can afford, and these are at the right hand of God. When debased by sin, it sinks to a level with present things; when regenerated by the Spirit, it soars to heaven.

The most prosperous, in a worldly sense, are not the most happy; it is more frequently the contrary. The accumulation of wealth, for instance, does not extinguish the desire for more. You might as well attempt to extinguish a fire with oil. The more it is gratified, the more it expands. Success, instead of producing satiety, seems to stimulate its energy, and irritates rather than allays. The world and what it contains cannot satisfy us, because it is the world. The soul is from God; its moral tendencies rise above the world; its faculties are too high to be satisfied with any object inferior to the Divine glory. This is the primary object of religion—to bring the soul in contact with such realities, and to fit it for their enjoyment. Hence, in these things the good man finds a satisfaction and a repose which the worldling knows nothing of. He can say, "*Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*" Yet this is only a *foretaste* of eternal joy; it is but the prelibation of "*the river of the water of life.*" It is little more than an *anticipation* of an eternal feast.

It was this principle which enabled Christ to speak in such a language of the blessings he had to bestow, and to ascribe such wonderful properties to them. "*Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*" Brethren, in heaven the almost infinite void of the human heart will be filled up.

These objects are exactly suited to the highest tendencies of the mind. There our social feelings will find uninterrupted enjoyment. Our intellectual faculties will be ever employed on subjects of the utmost sublimity and grandeur. Our moral sentiments will be gratified with an unceasing supply of spiritual beauty. Every desire of the soul, when in heaven, will receive an instantaneous supply. Every mental power, and every bodily energy, will be successfully and happily employed. This combination of activity and enjoyment, without weariness or imperfection, constitutes the unequalled superiority of the felicity of heavenly things. They are, therefore, not only proper objects of desire, but the only objects worthy of our intense affection.

III. These things belong to the Christian.

To seek after heavenly things is the great object of the Christian life, just as that of a merchant seeking goodly pearls is to explore those regions where they are supposed to lie. Being partakers of the heavenly calling, Christians have received a solemn summons from God to come out from the world. And our Lord and Master expects us so to walk as to show forth his praise. All other pursuits are subordinate—all other pleasures inferior. When we forget these important principles, we lose the sacred and dignified character of Christians.

To set our "*affections on things above*" is to increase our spiritual-mindedness; and to have this continually augmenting is to add, day by day, to our treasure in heaven. It is natural for men of the world to pursue the things of the world. To do so is a part of their character. But it is equally natural for a Christian to live for heaven, and in the pursuit of eternal good. "*Ye are not of the world*," says Christ, "*even as I am not of the world.*" No! to all its attractions we have been "*crucified together with Him. We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.*" How can one professing to be a Christian, if the profession be real, live to the world, as if it were a final portion of good? It is impossible. Earth can have no charms for him, compared with heaven. There God, his Father, dwells; there Christ, his elder brother, ever lives; there are the angels who rejoiced over his conversion, and who long for his arrival to join their company; there are the "*spirits of just men made perfect*," some of whom were his own friends and fellow-pilgrims, and who have preceded him to glory. Where, then, *can* his heart be, but in heaven? Whither *can* his affections tend, but to that brighter world whose joys can never end, and whose glory is unutterable? Those blessed inhabitants drink at the source of the river of the water of life; the Christian sips the stream, but he earnestly desires to share with them in their exalted privilege.

IV. This is the only pursuit that can be permanently successful.

Every thing in the present life is uncertain, but heavenly things are secured by the promise of "*the God who cannot lie;*" who "*hath sworn by himself, because He could swear by no greater, that we might have strong consolation.*" They are also secured by the Divine power and faithfulness. The heirs of salvation have a good hope, through grace, of "*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away.*" And it is secured to them so firmly, that the heavens and earth shall pass away ere one tittle of God's word can fail.

With the world is an arm of flesh, but with us is an arm of Omnipotence. Therefore our hope is sure and steadfast. Are you desirous of securing this felicity? Then heaven has directed your choice. A light from heaven has shone upon you. It will increase more and more, until you arrive in the regions of unclouded day. To be engaged in a pursuit which will be crowned

with success inspires a feeling of strong confidence, which animates and sustains the mind amid every difficulty. There is a concurrence of the highest reason with the Scriptural precept, which exhorts us to set "*our affections on things above.*"

V. We shall very soon quit the present life.

What is more uncertain than the present life? Its utmost extreme, if it be placed at the farthest limit of the space allotted to us in this probationary scene, removes to a very small distance the hour of our departure. A gray hair, though it may be unobserved, is a silent messenger to announce the approach of death. It reminds us that life is wasting away, and that our *earthly house* is decaying.

Why, then, should we love a world we must so soon quit? If it were a *final condition* of our being, the case would be widely different. But it is foolish to cherish a strong desire for its pleasures, when the gratification will so soon be over. If we fix our affections upon this world, we shall soon see the grave of our hopes and joys. How irrational, therefore, to cling to a world we must so soon leave! How vain to attach ourselves so firmly to a structure which will crumble into dust, and bury us beneath its ruins! "*The fashion of this world passeth away.*" Our earthly tabernacle will soon be dissolved. We can transport no earthly possession to the *better country.* Riches and honours must all be left behind. What propriety and force there are in the exhortation, "*Set your affections on things above!*"

Good men, when they go away, carry their treasure with them. Then they can triumph in the article of death, and rejoice in the hope of *the glory which is to follow.*

1. *Where things above are, is the residence of Christ, the High Priest and Intercessor.* How strong a motive does such a fact supply to place our affections there! Can we forget *Him?* Can we ever cease to love *Him?* Then the love we bear to Him, who first loved us, affords, by its influence, additional aid, and imparts additional propriety to our compliance with the precept contained in these words.

2. *In proportion as you set your affections on heavenly things, so will your piety increase.* Your prayers will be more ardent and sincere; your desires after holiness more deep and strong; your spiritual-mindedness more glowing and operative; your fitness for heaven more manifest day by day. Then "*set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.*"

XLV.

MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN.*

COLOSSIANS, i., 12: *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*

[Preached at Leicester, on the morning and afternoon of a Lord's Day, January, 1811.]

THIS subject, my brethren, is of vast importance, and in making some general preparatory observations, immediately arising from the words now read, I shall remark, first, The apostle ascribes the work of preparing men for heaven to the Father; and, secondly, That it is evidently implied in the text, that none will be admitted to heaven without they are prepared for it. This preparation is the great end of the gospel administration. Its precepts and doctrines are all subservient to this purpose, namely, "To the perfecting of the saints," "for the edifying of the body of Christ." The immediate author is the Holy Spirit; hence true Christians are said to be the fruits of the Spirit, and "filled with the fruits of righteousness." Again, a spirit of thankfulness for being made meet for heaven is the constant experience of sincere Christians. They are represented as "giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." This is the habitual temper of all true Christians. In order to understand what that preparation is which is here spoken of, it will be proper for us briefly to consider,

1st. The views which are given us of the heavenly state in the Scriptures.

2dly. What those views and principles are.

3dly. The ground this lays for habitual gratitude to God.

First. The view here given us of heaven is that of an inheritance. Secondly. It is an inheritance of the saints. Thirdly. It is in light.

First. It is an inheritance, or an allotted portion. This is an allusion to the possession of the land of Canaan. There was something very particular in the assignment of that land to the children of Israel. It was an inheritance, in distinction from an original possession, and it was to be their abode to succeeding generations; it, therefore, never can be forfeited or alienated; for it is *their* inheritance. Though they are not, at present, in possession of it, it is still in abeyance for them, and they will certainly enter upon it; for God will never rest until the descendants of his friend, Abraham, again possess it. Moses declares that it was originally assigned to them by God at a very early period. In the 32d chapter of Deuteronomy, and 7th, 8th, and 9th verses, he says, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many gener-

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

ations ; ask thy father, and he will show thee ; thy elders, and they will tell thee ; when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel ; for the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." This account alludes to the general dispersion of mankind, at the building of Babel, when some part of the descendants of Noah went to the east, and some to the west ; then it was that the Holy Land was thus marked out, and reserved as "the portion of his people." And what was the reason of this assignment ? It was intended to be a standing type of the heavenly inheritance. In this view, the term *inheritance* conveys two ideas. First, an inalienable and indubitable right : the title to it never can be forfeited ; "for in Jesus Christ all the promises are yea, and amen." The heirs of this heavenly inheritance "are kept by Jesus Christ" in a perpetual state of rectitude and holy expectation, and Jesus Christ will one day say unto them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom (as your portion in heaven) prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

Secondly. This view of the heavenly inheritance denotes a firm and unalterable possession. They who enter into it will never more go out ; they can never be dispossessed. They will never be assailed by superior force. "They will die no more ; they will hunger and thirst no more ; they will sin no more ;" but will be equal to, and as, the angels of God. There is nothing here, my brethren, that deserves the name of possession. How little hold can we take of the possessions of this world, as they are called ! A thousand circumstances rise up to deprive us of them. Riches "take to themselves wings and fly away ;" "or what is our life ? It is even a vapour ;" and what can a vapour grasp ? Our life is like a journey : we halt at different stages of it ; we then rest from our labour, and another follows and supplies our place.

The second idea suggested is, that it is an inheritance of *the saints*, viz., that it is not indiscriminately bestowed. It is not for all classes and characters ; but as the land of Canaan was for one race of people, so it was typical of the selection that would be made by God for the heavenly Canaan.

It has often been observed that "heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people." The heirs of this inheritance are styled, in Scripture, "saints," or holy persons ; as the apostle describes them, "To them that are sanctified by Christ Jesus, and called to be saints." They are separated from the world, from profane to pious purposes ; they pass from things visible to things invisible. They are said to be kept in God the Father, and called to be saints, the saints of Christ Jesus. This honour have all the saints, however stigmatized by men of the world.

Our calling is of Christ : then we are to be forming ourselves upon the pattern He has left us. It is a holy calling, a receiving of his testimony as true, a surrendering of ourselves to Him, to be saved and made happy in his own way. This, you see, suggests the necessity

of preparation for heaven; for it is not to be possessed by the unholy, or profane, or by dogs. There are such characters who are styled, in the Scriptures, dogs, viz., all impure and unholy persons. Such as are unawed by the authority of God, that are living after the flesh; these are called dogs.

Thirdly. It is an inheritance of the saints *in light*. Light is a perpetual property, and consists of these three parts: First, knowledge, or, rather, vision. Secondly, purity. Thirdly, glory.

First. Knowledge, or vision; not that sort of knowledge which is attained here by great labour and uncertainty, for it will then be intuitive, like what visible objects are now to us, striking on the senses at once, which is very different from what we obtain from propositions, or from inference, or analogy.

The Apostle Paul says, "For then shall I see as I am seen, and know even as I am known." Also the Apostle John, "Then we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The saints shall see his face—the face of the Great Eternal: the Psalmist says, "Then shall I be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness;" they shall serve him day and night in his temple, and never more go out. Moses was permitted to see God, while his glory passed by him and he was covered with his hand; but only his back parts, for none can behold his face and live. Isaiah, when he beheld God in the temple in vision, exclaimed, "Wo is me, for I am undone, because mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Good men, then, shall see God, and heaven is to be the place and mount of vision. Here we have but a little light let in upon our ideas. It is only the *refuse* of light; but those are regions of clear view—nothing to intercept the vision. Heaven, my brethren, is that state, that pure region of light—"the city of the great King," the gates of which stand open by day, for there is no night there.

How limited, my brethren, are all our faculties and prospects, and how circumscribed, here? We hear and read of the true sayings of God; but how little do we know of him? How many questions occur that we cannot solve? How narrow are the limits and confines of light and knowledge in various respects—as to the mode of existence and perfections of the Divine nature—the mysteries of the death of Christ, dying for the ungodly, and the great purposes and destinies of the whole human race; but in his light we shall see light, for there it is a region of light.

Secondly. It being represented to us as an "inheritance of the saints in light," denotes purity. The Apostle John declares, "If any of us say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Light being the most clear and defecated substance or property we know or have, is a proper emblem of purity. In heaven there will be nothing but purity. There will be no disorderly passions; there will be no conflicts between the better and worst parts of our nature—the best of men having now to make this confession, "that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," "so that they cannot do the things that they would."

There there will be nothing but light and beauty, and order and rectitude, as well as knowledge; and this will produce a sort of ecstatic heat of enjoyment, as will change us into their resemblance, for "we shall see as we are seen, and know even as we are known."

All the dispensations of the gospel will then be perfected in the purity and bliss of the saints. The redeemed were seen in vision by the Apostle John, in the Revelations, as standing "faultless before the throne of God and the Lamb, in white robes, and with palms in their hands, singing glory to God and the Lamb."

Thirdly. The heavenly inheritance will be a state of unspeakable majesty and glory. This idea we cannot separate from light. *Here* there are only some faint beams, some feeble rays from the Divine nature; but in the glory of the New Jerusalem "the light of the sun will not be needed," for "the Lord God and the Lamb," we are informed, "are the light of it." When the Apostle Paul was going to Damascus to persecute the disciples and bring them bound to Jerusalem, there suddenly burst upon him an effulgence that gives us some idea of the heavenly light and glory. Jesus Christ appeared to him in the way with such majesty and glory, with a light from heaven so powerful and dazzling, that it struck him blind to the ground. But, great as this light was, it was very inferior to the glory of heaven, "for the Lord God is the light thereof;" and we, my brethren, who are the faithful followers of Christ, shall walk in this light, and shall worship in its glory and beauty.

Conceive what this world would be without light; but there we shall be in an element of perpetual light and glory, flowing forth from the presence of God and the Lamb forever and ever.

Now let me ask, my brethren, is every person here made meet and fit for heaven? meet for this inheritance of the saints in light? Are all of you fitted to find your happiness "in serving God day and night in his temple?" Remember, if you have no taste for religion here, no delight in praising Him in his earthly courts, how will you be able "to sing the songs of Zion in heaven?" If you have no earnest desires after God here, how can you be happy there when in his immediate presence? On the whole, what reason is there, my brethren, to give thanks to God, if any of us are made meet to be partakers of this inheritance of "the saints of light?" The poorest person in this assembly, however mean in his outward appearance and condition in life—that man who has this evidence of meetness bears in his heart the marks of a celestial nobility, and will be made up at last "among his jewels." "For they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." And who are they that will be thus honoured and distinguished? They are such as receive his gospel, that do his will, who are keeping his sayings, and that "are called to be saints." For "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Having considered some of the views that are given to us of the heavenly state as an inheritance of the saints, we shall, in the second place, contemplate more particularly the preparation that is necessary to an entrance into that state, or the dispositions and characters of those that will enter therein.

What is there, my brethren, so important to any of us as to have just views of a future world, and to possess those dispositions which will afford to us a well-founded hope of our title to partake of its blessedness? We have already given you some of the most important ideas connected with this passage. We have considered heaven as an inheritance, and as an inheritance of the saints in light; that we are to be made meet for it, principally and indispensably, by a work of God in our souls, and that our employment, consequently, should be in "giving thanks to the Father" for vouchsafing to us so important a gift. We shall proceed briefly to inquire in what particulars this preparation consists. It is a work of sanctification. It is a renewing of our natures after the image of Him who hath created us. This sanctification of the heart is by the Spirit of God, and none can enter into heaven but such as are of this character.

The Holy Spirit of God is promised as the great sanctifier of the people of God; but as the means employed are various, we can but slightly touch upon them. In the 20th verse of this chapter the apostle speaks of reconciliation, and of Jesus Christ as reconciling all things to himself; and again, in the 21st verse, says, "And you that were some time alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet *now* hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblamable in his sight." The first thing here stated is, that men are reconciled to God—that they are brought into a state of favour with God, through Christ: viz., by his assumption of humanity, by his being offered on the cross. "He hath reconciled all things to himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven, as a sacrifice for sin." Each of these expressions is remarkably emphatic; they rise one above another in majesty and significancy. To be more particular. *First*, the most radical part of this preparation is a cordial reception of Divine truth. Real Christians are said to be of the truth. "Every one that heareth my voice," the Saviour saith, "is of the truth; sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth." The foundation of this is declared, also, by our Lord when he says, "For these have received my word, and they have known that thou hast sent me," "therefore the Father loveth you, because ye have believed that I came forth from the Father." It is not, then, every manner of believing the truth that prepares men for eternal life, but a receiving of it in the *love* of it. It is a reception of the Divine truth contained in the Scriptures, on account of that impress of God which is upon it—on account of the beauty and glory of the Divine perfections displayed in it. This makes it effectual, "working mightily in all them that believe." It is received by true Christians into the heart, and they are "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

In that passage in St. John's gospel where it is said that some things are written, and some not, it is added, "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name." How remarkable is that expression of the apostle, and it is written for our consolation, "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost!" What, then, my brethren, can be inferred from these passages, but that there is a sort of preparation necessarily produced by the Spirit of God; for how can faith save you unless it includes in it true holiness? If a man thus receives the gospel, on account of that impress of God which is upon it—on account of the beauty and glory of the Divine perfections displayed in it, there is a living principle in the heart of that person, as a preparation for eternal life. Whoever has seen the glory of God in the cross of Christ—whoever has admired the harmony of the Divine attributes meeting in Him, "whom God hath set forth to declare his righteousness in the forgiveness of sins," and has surrendered himself cordially into his hands, and devoted himself to his service, that person is made meet, in some happy measure, for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Secondly, A very essential part of this preparation consists in sincerity and purity; since nothing that maketh abomination, or loveth a lie, will enter there. He that can in truth say, with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a right spirit," hath the beginnings of eternal life. He that laments the disorders of his heart and inward thoughts, and wishes and strives to be delivered from them, hath the sparks of Divine love, and the tokens of Divine grace; for there can be no such thing as preparation for heaven, with an allowed indulgence of sin. It is in being "perfect in holiness," unblamable in holiness, that this meetness consists; for the preparation must be of the same sort with the final condition; the change must be of the same nature as that in which the character is perfected.

Thirdly, That a spirit of universal and cordial obedience to the will of God is another part of this preparation. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." The will of God is perfectly done in heaven, and the extent of our Saviour's prayer is, "thy will be done on earth *as it is* done in heaven." In heaven there is no disobedience. In heaven they serve God day and night, and his angels are perpetually employed in executing his will. In order to be prepared for heaven, a principle of obedience must be formed in our minds—an implicit disposition to submit to his disposing and prescribing will; to say, Lord, "here am I, what wilt thou have me to do?" "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to eat of the tree of life, to enter through the gates into the city." He that alloweth himself in the least violation of his commandments, is guilty of violating the whole, by disparaging his authority as lawgiver, upon which all rests, and from which all emanates; for in heaven no one will be setting up his own will against that of God. This spirit of obedience to the

will of God is the spirit of every true Christian. He habitually "exercises a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man." He can appeal to God with David, and say, "Thou, Lord, knowest that I am not wicked." Let no man deceive you; "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous;" "and by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love me and keep my commandments." It is true, that the best of Christians will lament their infirmities and deficiencies; but it will be their daily prayer, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults, and keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins;" for if the servants of Christ allow themselves to live in sin, they live in the essential violation of all religion.

Fourthly. Genuine humility is another part of this preparation for heaven. Our Saviour insists upon this grace. When his disciples were contending for pre-eminence, he took a little child and set it among them, and said, "He that will be greatest among you, let him become as this little child." Now, why does our Saviour teach them this, but that they may know that his kingdom here is of the same nature as in heaven; that it requires the spirit of child-like simplicity and humility? This grace contains in it all the rudiments of the heavenly state. Without this disposition we cannot be the subjects of his kingdom on earth, much less of the celestial state; and except this be deeply rooted in your minds here, you cannot be in a prepared condition for the kingdom of heaven. When we see how persons are ready to be elevated with the little distinctions of the present state, we are apt to imagine they must possess some of the same feelings of pride when they are in heaven, seated upon thrones; but, on the contrary, *there* this principle of humility will be deeper and more manifest; for there we shall have a profound consciousness that we are nothing, and have nothing of our own; that, as sinners, we have deserved nothing, but have been exalted only by the free grace of God. The majesty of God will then fill all our hearts. We shall feel that all our sufficiency is of God. There the blessed, by being made instruments of good to their fellow-creatures, will feel that they are mere streams from the ocean of all good. They will lose themselves by giving and ascribing all to the praise of Him, by whose grace they are made kings and priests unto God. It is, my brethren, the severing of ourselves from God that occasions pride. It is a forgetfulness of God. It is a disposition to sacrifice to ourselves; to forget the giver in the gift. But in heaven, every one will perceive that it is God who has exalted him; that his glory and greatness are only borrowed rays; that all is but dust and ashes, when compared to the greatness and authority of God, the giver. Therefore the lower we lie in the dust before God now, the nearer we are to being lifted up; and He will never raise us up until we feel ourselves "humbled under the mighty hand of God." "Thus saith the Lord, Let no man glory but in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord." A sense of this is the principle that keeps and preserves all his servants from pride and haughtiness.

Fifthly. Love is another part of this preparation. Genuine and ardent love, in the first place, to God, and, in the next, to his creatures, especially towards his Church, is another evidence of meetness for heaven. Love will there be the very element of our life; for God is love. This holy disposition consists in complacency in the excellence of the object, and in mingling ourselves in the happiness of all around us: "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you," is the apostle's prayer for the Thessalonians. "And by this we know that we have passed from death unto life," says the Apostle John, "because we love the brethren." He that liveth to himself is dead while he liveth. How much more, my brethren, do we need of this temper of genuine love?

Lastly. In having the first-fruits of that blessed state is another evidence. These are styled, in Scripture, the earnest of the inheritance. The apostle, in the Corinthians, says, "Now He that hath wrought us for this selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." Again, they are called "fruits of the Spirit;" they became almost deified by having the Spirit. By having eaten of the grapes of Eshcol, like the ancient Israelites, they have a taste of the promised land, and are filled with earnest desires to possess it. It is thus that God has been pleased to grant some foretastes of the glory to be hereafter revealed in us. He takes the Christian apart upon the mount, and gives him a prospect of the heavenly Canaan, and at such happy seasons He produces in him a foretaste of the same sort of happiness that will be enjoyed in heaven. In consequence of this, my brethren, we have ardent desires after heaven. Having tasted of the joys to come, trials and afflictions are less terrible, and the sepulchre becomes divested of its gloom. By increasing our deadness to the things of time and sense, we long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. Time will no longer be prized by us, because eternity will more than compensate its loss.

We are called, for the most part, "to live by faith;" and in consequence of this, there rise in our hearts earnest desires after God. There is a willingness to go into the unseen state; and He, my brethren, "who hath wrought us for this selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

Now, in conclusion, it becomes us to see if we possess this preparation in any degree; for this is the end of all our ministry—the end of all the revelations of God, to prepare a people for himself. This was the earnest desire of good men in every age. Abraham sought a better country, even a heavenly; Moses forsook the pleasures of Egypt for the recompense of reward; and if you have none of this spirit, the gospel is heard in vain; there is eternal life, but we have no part or lot in the matter. How necessary, my brethren, is it to begin to seek this, as those who are about to migrate to another country?

We are about to exchange worlds; the ocean of eternity is nearly in view. You have seen, or many of us have seen, persons embark

and leave the shores of mortality. You have heard the tolling bell; the change is passed—the decree is gone forth—"He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is holy, let him be holy still." And have the Scriptures taken so much pains to tell us of the inheritance of the saints in light, and made such mighty preparations that we should possess it, and you remain stupid and insensible, like those in the time of Noah, till the flood came and swallowed them up? How foolish and infatuated thus to judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life! Ask yourselves, are you ready? For you know not what day or hour the Son of Man cometh. I hope some of us are prepared for heaven; see that you are advancing; trim your lamps, quicken your pace; remember, a few more pains, afflictions, and trials, and "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Long for a diviner ardour; remember that absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Cherish these views, and seek for wider prospects; think less of this world, lament its losses less bitterly; "set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth." Pray that God would direct you, and enable you to hold out to the end. O that each of us were more intent upon this preparation! He hath promised us all that a God can bestow, and all that a creature can wish. Let us forget the things that are behind, and reach to those that are before, for the prize is eternal life, a crown of glory. This was the conduct of the apostles, and are you wiser than they? They said, "Lord, to whom should we go but unto thee?" It was this that enabled them to meet death with calmness and composure, even in the most terrific forms; and it was this appeal which sustained their confidence, and animated their hopes: "Lord, to whom should we go but unto thee, for thou hast the words of eternal life?" God grant that this may be the case with us all.

XLVI.

END OF THE UPRIGHT MAN.*

PSALM XXXVII., 37: *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, February 3, 1828.]

THE prosperity and exaltation of the wicked, and the affliction and depression of the righteous, have been a mystery and stumbling-block in all ages. Hence we find the Prophet Jeremiah complaining, "He hath hedged me about; he hath made my chain heavy:" "He hath made my paths crooked:" "I was a derision to all my people, and their song all the day." And David, also, in his days, we find referring to these intricacies in the conduct of Divine Providence. The psalm from whence this text is taken

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

sets out with the expression of these feelings, and with an exhortation: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed;" and verse 10 follows, with the solemn conclusion of the matter: "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." The Psalmist, in the words of our text, proceeds to furnish an antidote to those feelings and wrong judgments, in which we are apt to indulge when looking upon these mysterious dispensations, by referring to the final state and condition of the good man. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." We find God has been pleased to put this mark and seal upon him, notwithstanding outward appearances and difficulties, to signify that such are the special objects of his care.

1st. Here are two things to be noticed: it is the perfect man and the upright that God approves.

2dly. The reason assigned for inviting our attention to these characters: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

3dly. Why we are to mark, or for what purpose, and with what views are we thus to mark and behold.

First. Perfect and upright are terms used in Scripture to denote persons of acknowledged piety. They are those who are sanctified by the Divine word, and renewed by the Divine Spirit. This, however, must be understood with some limitation; not that they attain to a sinless perfection in this life; for they are sensible of their deficiencies, and their hearts will be ready to acknowledge and mourn over them. Thus Noah is said to be a perfect man: "For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." The same was said with respect to Job: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth—a perfect and an upright man—one that feareth God and escheweth evil." And in the 119th Psalm, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord;" which may be rendered perfect and upright. You yourselves, my brethren, have known such characters. Though in many there may appear deficiencies in their temper and conduct, in the aberrations of life, yet there must be a prevailing principle of integrity and uprightness. It is true, there are some professors who have lived the same sort of life as Ephraim, of whom it is said, in the 7th chapter of Hosea, 8th and 9th verses, "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned; strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not." There are others that are worldly, sensual, and selfish, who give occasion to those who are without religion to stumble and blaspheme; and unless, my brethren, we make it our aim

sincerely to do the will of God and walk in his ways, the world may justly call in question the reality of our religion. The spirit of our holy religion is an active spirit, which wars against all the enemies of God, and is never satisfied till it attains the Divine image. The true subjects of it are restless and dissatisfied with themselves, until they are holy even as God is holy: "Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness."

Secondly. The reason assigned for inviting our attention to these characters: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." It will be of little consequence, however severely we may suffer through life, if we do but end well. And however prosperous we may have been, and however we may have enjoyed all the pleasures and gayeties of life, having had every appetite indulged, what will it avail us if the end be not peace? The scenes of the present life are about to close, and will vanish like thin air. The world will be converted into an element of despair to all its votaries. On the other hand, if nothing else can be affirmed but that our end is peace, it will afford a delightful satisfaction, after all the privations and afflictions we may have endured. It is true that many good men have been harassed with distressing temptations and fears in a dying hour; for sin and holiness, my brethren, will appear in a very different light then to what they did in the agitating scenes of life. Many allowances, however, must be made for the constitution and temperament of such persons; the disease, also, may have been such, that nothing but a supernatural power could have prevented the mind from being clouded and agitated; yet Jesus Christ has made peace the standing bequest to his Church. "My peace," He says, "I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." He will give peace in affliction, preserving the subjects of it from despondency; and peace in prosperity, to keep them humble. We find, also, that in those seasons of deep suffering the graces of his people are invigorated and replenished. As eternity approaches, the Christian is brought nearer to the proper element of his existence; then it is that these graces are no longer *contemplated* in the abstract, but are *felt;* and, as heaven opens upon his view, the remembrance of the sorrows of his life will pass away, and his devout mind will be fixed in holy contemplation upon it. The soul is no longer divided between the things that are seen and those that are unseen; for the Christian is then left alone with his God and his Redeemer; he then looks on the world, not as a prospect, but in the retrospect—as an interest that he has survived. The faculties of the mind are then entirely spiritual, and they come into close contact with the things of eternity; he looks not at "the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

Besides, the Divine Being is faithful who hath promised, and will not suffer his people "to be tempted above measure;" and

He frequently reserves his brightest manifestations and richest cordials for this period. Nothing, at these seasons, can support the soul but the hope of the Divine glory; and He then, in his mercy, pours in new and Divine emanations of himself. He then especially gives the seal of his Spirit, that his servants may have such an intercourse with heaven as shall put them apart from the world, and place them in company "with the spirits of just men made perfect." They are *already*, in the words of infallible truth, "come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels;" so that it may justly be said of persons of sincere and exalted piety and eminent consistency (and we have seen and known many such), that their end was peace. Observe, it is not said that the end is to be joy or transport, but *peace;* for joy is not promised to any, but that their end shall be *peace.* A calm sense of the Divine favour, a peace in believing, which passeth all understanding. Peace is the bread of God's children; it is the fruit of his pardoning love—the effect of justification; it is that which the Christian lives upon; it is the bread of life, and therefore God will not deny it to him in a dying hour.

Thirdly. Why we are to mark the perfect man, or for what purpose. There is no spectacle, my brethren, in the world so lovely, so illustrious, as the life and death of a saint. Jesus Christ has his Church in the world, which is composed of saints who believe in Him, and love and obey Him. His precepts they follow, because they love him. Take but this Church out of the world, and what would remain? None that love God, none that fear Him, none that have a Scriptural hope in his mercy, would be found in it. But the spiritual life of a saint must have its commencement. It is not natural to him; it is a supernatural life. "The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned." This knowledge must be wrought in him by the Spirit of God. He sends his Spirit from on high to effect this great purpose, and as the gracious agent comes from heaven, so is the conversion of the sinner an object of interest to the celestial world. Hence we are informed that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." And what is repentance? It is the commencement of a holy course. It is a turning-point in the grand concerns of religion, issuing in a lively faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, if it be a true and genuine repentance. Those who have experienced this Divine change are his servants, are his subjects, whom He will own and bless—to whom He will manifest himself, and bring to them the presence of his Son and the ministry of his holy angels; for he has loved them with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness will he draw them to himself. Their affections are purified by a sight of the immaculate purity and excellence of the object of their faith. There is produced in them a beauty, a sym-

metry, a harmony, and consistency; and they are arrayed in the beauty of holiness, and filled with the fruits of righteousness.

Again, besides this, it is our duty to mark the perfect man, and to behold the upright, in order to establish our own minds in the conviction of the truth and the reality of the religion we profess. There are some who doubt of religion, as being a supernatural principle, and consider it as merely fanaticism or enthusiasm. The only way to convince these persons, who will not believe the Scriptures, or any other evidence, "though one rose from the dead," is to refer them to matter of fact, of plain and certain testimony—to point them to a fixed and permanent principle in the heart. It is to refer them to such as we have known and have marked—men who have found their secret devotions to be like the still waters of consolation—and who, when they have returned from these sacred exercises, have had their faces shining, like that of Moses when he had seen the face of God. We have seen them exulting in the decays of nature, saying, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." They have appeared like the victor who is about to be crowned with a wreath of glory. "Mark," then, "the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." In youth, it may be, the servant of God became purified from the corruptions that are in the world through lust, and, as he advanced in life, delighted himself with the Saviour, till he became wholly adorned, elevated, and prepared for the glory that shall be revealed.

Again, this subject may be improved with a view to the imitation of the "perfect man." The disciple of Jesus Christ has passed from death unto life, and his sins are pardoned by the blood and righteousness of his Saviour. Unite yourselves, then, my brethren, to such as we have here described. "Cast in your lot among them." Haste as for your lives; now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Persons of this character began their course in a sense of their ruin and danger, and humbled themselves in the dust before God, and He lifted them up. They were purified and purged that they might bring forth much fruit, and their end was peace. God grant that our end may be peace!

XLVII.

THE HEAVENLY ASSEMBLY.*

MATTHEW, viii., 11 : *Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*

[Preached before the Bedford Union, May, 1817.]

THE occasion which drew these words from the lips of our Saviour was the conduct of that centurion who came and requested Him to heal his paralytic servant. There is not in the gospel narrative, nor can there be in any other, a finer, a more affecting instance of genuine humility and vigorous faith, those two most essential graces of the Christian character, than the instance presented in this centurion. "Lord," said he, "I am not worthy"—they had said he was worthy to obtain his request—"I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." This is an exquisite instance of spiritual beauty in character and conduct. This man, so deep in his humility, so strong in his faith—like the Syrophœnician woman, distinguished by her kindred excellence—was a Gentile; he was a pagan soldier! Accordingly, "when Jesus heard, He marvelled:" his human nature, susceptible of astonishment and admiration, exercised it on this, as on a fit occasion. He, who marvelled not at worldly wonders, marvelled here. His tender and comprehensive spirit, acquainted with the deep apostacy of our nature from God, started in a pleased surprise, as at the discovery of a rose in a desert, at this supernatural union of abasement and elevation—unaffected consciousness of his own guilt, and unhesitating confidence in the Saviour's omnipotence—this truly Abrahamic piety, exhibited in a Roman centurion, a man placed in circumstances the least favourable to religion. Wonder, with us, is the effect of ignorance; with Jesus it was the effect of profound acquaintance with our nature. He, who knew when to wonder, wondered here, and exclaimed to those around, "Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel!" and then, in his own incomparable manner of raising an important lesson on some passing occurrence, He adverted to that "great multitude," collected out of all nations, that shall meet at last before the throne and before the Lamb. "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." This declaration, while in its primary and literal design it anticipates the vocation of the Gentiles as fellow-heirs, with Israel, of spiritual and celestial blessings, refers us, in its full and final accomplishment, to the grand eternal assembly of the redeemed: it points the eye of

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

faith and hope to a prospect, before which all others fade into littleness and darkness.*

An angel, in the Apocalypse, carried away John, in the Spirit, to a great mountain, another and a higher Pisgah, "and showed him that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God:" even so let us, my brethren, abstracted in an humbler vision of the Spirit, "turn aside, and see this great sight;" let us catch, if we can, a dim and distant glimpse of the glory, so well expressed as "the glory that shall be revealed." Amid the evanescent cares and trifles of this preparatory state, let us gaze for a moment on that heavenly scene, so powerfully adapted to stimulate our dulness, console our sadness, and exalt our affections above earthly things. Viewed in this comprehensive light, the text appears to include or suggest the following ideas:

I. First, that of an assembly, composed of a vast multitude and various descriptions of persons. "Many shall come from the east and the west." What a multitude must that be, which embraces all the pious of all ages, past, present, or yet future, from the beginning to the end of time! "a multitude," indeed, "which none can number;" innumerable as the leaves of autumn, which annually moulder into earth; types of the buried bodies of the saints; innumerable as the leaves of spring, which annually reappear in vernal beauty; types of those bodies, as destined to reappear in the beauty of the resurrection. And not more innumerable than diversified in the circumstances of their mortal history. Persons who passed the time of their pilgrimage under different economies: every dispensation—Patriarchal, Mosaic, Christian, will meet and mingle there. And there is reason to hope that not those only who walked with God in the shadowy moonlight of Judaism, and those who followed Christ in the bright sunshine of the gospel; but those also who "felt after their Maker, if happily they might find Him," in the glimmering gloom of natural reason, may swell that immense host of the redeemed: men of Nineveh; a Queen of Sheba; Gentiles who, not knowing the law, showed its work written in their hearts.

Natives of every land shall there be found; man from every part of man's terrestrial abode; countrymen of every name and tribe; from the East, where man and revelation first appeared, to the West, which was discovered and evangelized so late in the day of time; from the burning Africa to the freezing Greenland; from the centre of Asia to the remotest isles of ocean. Not one of all the myriads dispersed, like particles of salt, over so many spots of earth—not one, in whose bosom glowed a spark of genuine love to God and man—not one shall be missing there.

There, again, shall be found subjects of every government which man has devised—from society in its primitive patriarchal simplicity, to society in its most artificial and splendid combination—from a state

* "The future state must exclusively be meant."—*Scott.* "It cannot be said, with any propriety, either that the holy patriarchs share with Christians in the present privileges of the gospel state; or that the Jews, at present, weep and wail on account of their being excluded from those privileges."—*Doddridge*, quoted by *Scott*, on Matt., viii., 11.—GRINFIELD.

of oppressive despotism to one of enlightened and rejoicing freedom. Those who here below lived under the most differing forms of social order may sit down together, at last, "in the kingdom of heaven;" for piety has existed in every age and land, independent of the diversity of political systems: "My kingdom," said Christ, "is not of this world:" Christianity carries with itself the power of coalescing with every species of civil constitution; its genius is not national: The kingdoms of this world shall become the one kingdom of our Lord.

Individuals, yet farther, of the most differing ranks and classes in society, shall be there collected in the most perfect harmony and union; princes and beggars, lords and servants; those who basked in the sunshine of fortune, and those who grovelled in the gloom of poverty: individuals of every occupation and profession, which the circumstances of the present life have rendered necessary; persons of every religious denomination, which, whatever its minor peculiarities, held Christ as its head, built on Christ as its foundation, and acknowledged its need of the renewing Spirit: persons of the most varied intellect and education; the simplest and the most profound; those whose minds were either illumined with science and taste, or were left so dark and uncultured as to be merely susceptible of the first principles of religion: persons, once more, of every individual disposition and address, natural or acquired, gentle or severe, open or reserved, elegant or rude; an immense collection of stones and jewels, obtained from the quarry of nature by the Maker and Lord of all, and so finely shaped and polished by his grace and skill, so wondrously cleared from the dark incrustations of sin, and wrought into the "beauties of holiness," that each, fixed in its place as a stone of the spiritual edifice, or as a jewel of the Redeemer's diadem, shall contribute its effect to the just variety and glory of the whole. For, as all stations of life, so all orders of mind, are alike embraced by religion; the centre of attraction and repose to all, how dissimilar soever in minor respects. The spirit of piety, the pervading principle of love, absorbs and annihilates all distinctions, how little in comparison! it binds innumerable hearts "as the heart of one man;" it assimilates all as children of one Father, brethren of Jesus Christ: the poor is exalted, the rich abased; the wise made simple, the simple wise. A faint and diminutive image of that immense, united assembly, is seen in these our Christian congregations, when "the rich and the poor meet together before the Lord, the Maker of them all."

II. This brings before us a second general idea, conveyed in the text, of the assembly described; that of a perfect harmony and congeniality in character among all the members, for spending eternity in happy fellowship. A company, collected for the purpose of mutual pleasure, ought to be composed, as we are all aware, of individuals sufficiently congenial in their tempers, opinions, and habits of life, especially if they are to continue long together: ill-sorted and discordant society is less to be desired than solitude. Now man, even before his fall, was formed for society: the first remark made on him by his Maker was, that "it is not good for man to be alone:" of all

his desires, none is so strong, of all his delights, none so deep, as the desire and delight of harmonious intercourse. In the present state, many imperfections, both circumstantial and personal, impede or impair this high enjoyment. In heaven, all these imperfections will exist no more. The first idea of heaven, as suggested in the text, is that of an immense, the second, that of a congenial society. Though "many will come from the east and the west"—though the assembly will be as varied as it will be vast—though persons of every dispensation, region, rank, business, intellect, disposition, civil condition, or religious denomination, will be there intermingled; yet will an exquisite unity of spirit coexist with the utmost diversity in all non-essential respects. This is implied in the representation of all the many, as conformed in spirit with the three illustrious patriarchs. And what was their distinguishing spirit? St. Paul, in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, informs us that it was faith; trust in God, and in his promise of the heavenly inheritance—the productive principle of holiness in life—of hope in death, which rendered its possessors superior alike to the frowns or the smiles of an evil world, and inspirited them to pass through every varied scene of affliction or allurement, "as strangers and sojourners," intent on their heavenly home.

This essence of religion, this vital spirituality of character, belongs alike to the highest and the humblest, the earliest and the latest, of believers; to David on a throne, or Jeremiah in a dungeon; to Noah in the darkness of the world before the flood, or Paul amid the blaze of apostolic revelations. And this is the germe of universal and eternal congeniality. All those myriads of redeemed and glorified spirits are united in this: they are all believers; such, in the true comprehensive meaning of that name, not theorists of doctrine, without devotion; of faith, without the obedience of faith (an epidemic error, exposed by St. James); but believers with the heart, students of purity, aspirants after perfection, insatiable until they are satisfied with that holiness which is the very character of Christ, of heaven, and of God: all like-minded with the Psalmist, who said, "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; and when I awake after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied." This is the spirit which they all partake; these are the features of that family likeness, which lives through every variety of mind and condition, and which, touched and illumined by celestial glory, will brightly distinguish the children of God.

III. A third idea contained in the text is that of repose. The assembly is not one collected for toil or for battle; it is one composed of those whose "warfare is accomplished;" those who "rest from their labour." Whatever be the services of the saints in glory, in that state of which we read that therein "His servants shall serve Him" (Rev., xxii., 3), they are all such as are perfectly consistent with the enjoyment of a Divine repose: the blessed after death, while they rest from their earthly labour, rest in their heavenly employ. "They sit down." The expression alludes, as you are aware, to the Eastern custom of reclining on couches; the most easy and pleasurable posture of waking repose. Heaven is a state of sabbatic rest; a

holy and a blissful cessation from all earthly care, from all sin-born wo. It was prefigured, from the first, in a dim miniature, by this day of sweet and sacred rest, succeeding to the days in which "man goes forth to his labour;" prefigured also by that Canaan, that land of happy repose, into which, after the forty years of their laborious pilgrimage, the Israelites were conducted by Joshua, whose name and whose office marked him as the type of Jesus, our spiritual Captain and Conqueror.

It is now the school-time, the season of the lesson and the rod; then will be the eternal holyday: it is now the season of the plough and harrow; then will be the pleasant harvest home; "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." In heaven there will be no more need to watch and war, to endure hardness, and press on, like the little brave band of Gideon, "faint, yet pursuing." The harassing Canaanite will be forever expelled from that good land. Religion, now encompassed with those difficulties and discouragements which are adapted to a fallen state of trial—a state in which the most important duties are those of faith, hope, patience, prayer, humility, self-denial—religion will then be, indeed, and entirely, the rest of the soul, its natural element of acquiescence and delight. The sighs and tears of penitence, the unutterable groans of the spirit, will have place no more: there will remain only the never-cloying luxury of love, and joy, and adoring praise. Many of those who shall swell that company passed a large portion of their time on earth in suffering: prisoners of providence, while they were also "prisoners of hope," they dragged on their mortal life in drudgery or in disease: but then "there shall be no more pain, nor sorrow, nor crying; for the former things are passed away." "I heard a voice," the voice of the Spirit speaking from heaven, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labour!" Between the troubles of the world without, and those of the heart within, many, who shall be found in that assembly, had little rest on earth: they are there indemnified, they are there immeasurably overpaid. At times, perhaps, they recount the toils of the combat, the trials and dangers of the way; and, by the contrast, enhance their present condition of security and repose.

IV. A fourth idea, intimated in the words of our Lord, is that of a mutual recognition among all those whose relation to each other here is such as to admit of its perpetuation in that blessed state. "They shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," surely not as guests unknowing and unknown. It is reasonable to suppose that an instant and intimate acquaintance will be there commenced or renewed, such as will meet and satisfy our natural idea and desire of perfect social benevolence and beatitude: such as, even here, we know to be produced by unison of hearts—by that congeniality of spirits, which can transform a stranger into a friend—one whom we had never before seen, into one whom we shall never cease to remember and to love. How this vast extension of personal knowledge may be effected we need not curiously inquire. Every thing connected with that higher state of being is necessarily mysterious: it

is enough to recollect that God has prepared for those that love Him such good things as pass man's understanding; that his will and his power to bless are alike illimitable; that "then we shall see face to face, and know even as also we are known."

In accordance with this view, St. Paul regarded his converts as his "joy and crown," not here only, but also hereafter, "in the presence of the Lord Jesus." Moses and Elijah, on the mount of transfiguration, were intuitively recognised by the three disciples: the beggar Lazarus is represented as reposing next in place to the exalted Abraham, just as the beloved John reclined on the bosom of Jesus, in the converse of familiar friends at the same table. The allusion in that parable is the same as in the text, to the recumbent posture of the guests at an ancient Eastern banquet. On such occasions, the head of each guest approached the bosom of his nearest neighbour, while his feet were extended towards those of the neighbour on his other side; and thus Lazarus, leaning on Abraham, beautifully intimates that the meanest in earthly station may be the most highly favoured there: the superficial difference of rank will disappear in the real resemblance of spirit and character—the beggar that was rich in pious faith and patience, will be recognised and beloved by the most distinguished of the saints. The Redeemer himself honoured the penitent thief with that inestimable assurance, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise;" using, it is supposed, the expression, "be with Me," in allusion to the customary form of a festal invitation. "Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given to Me be with Me, that they may behold my glory," as guests at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Glorious and delightful anticipation! Whose heart does not yearn to realize it? Is there no parent that instinctively reverts to the departed child? no child that is reminded of the vanished parent? no friend of the severed friend? Be cheered by the thought, that in that assembly, however multitudinous, they will not be lost to your discovery: in heaven there will be no confusion—no difficulty to recognise the beloved Spirit in its transfigured and glorified form.

And though the nearer intimacies of nature or of friendship may even there, as here, retain a peculiar charm, who does not rejoice in the prospect of knowing many whom we knew not here, or knew only by their "praise in all the churches?" some whose names are embalmed in the book of God; like the patriarchal three mentioned in the text from whom "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," condescended to take one of his most distinguished and most expressive titles; like Adam, our common progenitor; Enoch, who never saw death; Noah, the preserver of our race; Moses, the leader; Aaron, the priest; David, the psalmist of Israel; Elijah, the antagonist of idolatry; Isaiah, the seraph of prophecy; Daniel, the pattern of pious firmness; John, the herald of the Saviour; Paul, the teacher of the Christian Church; Peter, so full of fervour; John, so full of love! to add not a single name of those Christian fathers, martyrs, reformers, ministers, missionaries, public or private individuals, of whom we may here have heard, with interest, in their lives, deaths, labours; or of

whom we may not have heard here; men who, like the diamonds of society, irradiated the scene in which they were placed, precious in the sight of the Lord and of his people; men who, like Abel, "being dead, yet speak;" speak, through every age, by the examples, the achievements, or the writings which they left behind; to some of whom, under the Divine blessing, we may have been ourselves indebted for our primary conversion or subsequent edification. Who would not desire to meet such a company? Who would not exult to be honoured with such friendships? to acknowledge his obligations to such men, as instruments of Him to whom all is due? For this there will be an eternal opportunity, when, if found faithful, we shall be favoured "to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

V. The fifth, and last, and most important idea, which may be extracted from our Lord's declaration in the text is, what has been adverted to, but not unfolded, that of a feast. The expression, rendered "sit down," more correctly, "recline," conveys this idea. The most familiar and obvious enjoyment of animal nature is thus transferred to the spirit and to heaven. By this metaphor the Oriental, more than other nations, express any exquisite delight. I need not remind you of those instances in Scripture, in which the spiritual blessings of the gospel are represented as a feast of the richest dainties, and wines the most refined; or in which our Saviour speaks of the gospel kingdom under the image of a marriage feast which a king made for his son, and to which guests of every description were freely invited.

When the joys of heaven are compared with a banquet, that there may be something literal designed by the comparison, I presume not either to affirm or to deny. Man was originally a compound being, an incarnate spirit; he was such while he yet retained the image of his Maker; and, though sin has brought death, and severed the spirit from its bodily frame, yet we are assured that a new, a spiritual, a glorified body will again invest the indwelling spirit of every believer. It seems, therefore, by no means unreasonable to suppose that an enjoyment, answering to the nourishment of the body, but proportioned to the glorious nature of a spiritual body, may be one among the manifold and unimaginable fruitions of immortality: "They that shall be counted worthy of that world, and of the resurrection, shall be as the angels," says our Lord; and we read of "angel's food," as distinct from man's. It may be that many pious persons, in their just abhorrence of a sensual paradise, have erred in an opposite extreme, by exploding all ideas of bodily fruition, and admitting only those of abstracted spirit, in the heavenly state. Be this as it may, the feast of heaven is principally to be referred to the mind, to the spiritual nature of man: a spiritual banquet, adapted to evey appetite and faculty of the glorified spirit; to the understanding and the affections; to memory and anticipation.

1. A feast of the understanding. Here we see darkly; now we know in part: but then! Where now so much obscurity attends our knowledge, as to its kind, there will then prevail the utmost clear-

ness: where our knowledge is now so partial as to its extent, it will be then perfect and complete. Nothing more amazing is said of that state, than that there "we shall know, even as we are known;" with a knowledge like that of which we are the subjects. One idea of glory is that of precision. Heaven is the world of light; God is light: in his light we shall see light. More clearly, more comprehensively, than we now see the first principles of knowledge, we shall then perceive all those miracles and mysteries of the Divine dispensations, in nature, providence, and grace, of which we now hear or speak so much, and understand so little; in reference to which we now think as children; but then, from this infantine state, we shall rise to adult maturity of mind. Man is formed to expatiate and luxuriate in varied knowledge: what a feast of knowledge, ennobled by devotion, will be spread in heaven for the intellect, proportionately expanded to receive it! With this will be spread,

2. A feast of the affections. Heaven is the world of ardour, as well as of light: the head and the heart shall be there replenished with equal satisfaction. St. Peter has reminded his brethren, with a beautiful emphasis, of Christ, as Him "whom, not having seen, they loved;" implying how much more they would love Him when they should come to see Him as He is; behold their King in his beauty; their Saviour in his glory. What a sight for enraptured admiration and love, He to whom we owe all that blessedness! What an object for all the noblest, the happiest sentiments of the overflowing heart, He who hath loved us, "washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God!" The measure of love will be the measure of glory: those, it is probable, will be nearest to the throne, and highest in bliss, who were here most purely filled with holy love: for love, which is the soul of religion, is the soul of heaven: "God is love; and he who dwells in love dwells in God," and is a partaker of the Divine beatitude.

Then will the Saviour's desire be fulfilled, that "all his disciples may be one." As love is essential to felicity, so must it be pure and perfect, in order to produce pure and perfect felicity. In a saint yet mortal, the purest love is impaired by much alloy of a fallen nature: no such alloy will be there. The whole spirit, without the least reserve, will there be surrendered to holiness: while new perceptions of spiritual beauty, new motives to spiritual love, will forever arise. There are now, in all our brethren, human imperfections and infirmities: the spirits of the just will be then "made perfect:" not a blemish will be visible in the bride of the Lamb: "all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, will be changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord." The principle of love, and the objects of love, will be alike exalted beyond conception.

3. A feast of memory. There is here a religious enjoyment of memory, in reviewing the way which we have been led, with all its trials and all its mercies: this will be infinitely heightened in heaven. Like the seaman on the cliff, gazing on the deep, after a voyage in which he has been mercifully saved from shipwreck; from that

calm and secure elevation will the saint look back on the little scene of his infantine existence, his providential and spiritual discipline. With what sacred interest, with what admiring gratitude, will he retrace all the windings of his path; his wonderful deliverances and restorations; his blessings in the disguise of troubles; his early convictions of sin, and attractions to the Saviour; his gradual detachment from the world; his slow steps in knowledge and sanctification; and all the wise and gracious leadings of Providence and the Spirit! He will then see the various parts of the plan, now seen disjointed, in their harmonious whole; every circumstance in all its relations. Like an Israelite in Canaan, recollecting the wilderness, he will regard these years of trial in their connexion with the eternity of recompense; these little struggles, with that great victory. In that retrospection, how important will appear our social Sabbaths and our secret devotions! how insignificant our worldly cares, pleasures, or afflictions!

4. And, finally, a feast of anticipation. It is an essential property of our minds to look forward as well as backward; to expect as well as remember. Anticipation, so far as the present life is concerned, is extremely circumscribed, and extremely precarious; we never foreknow what a day may bring forth. Hope, as alloyed with uncertainty, and contracted within bounds, will have no place in heaven; but "hope full of immortality," expectation assured of joys that can never fail, of "an inheritance incorruptible," of "an eternal weight of glory;" anticipating hope, like this, will bloom in amaranthine beauty there, as in its native and congenial clime. The soul, created with infinite desires, will triumph in the amplitude and grandeur of an infinite prospect. From the point of present bliss, it will stretch its view to the interminable succession, of which, according to our ideas, eternity is composed, while ever-brightening glories will gild the prospect that can have no horizon. As transiency is the fatal defect of sublunary joys, so the crown of glory is this, that it "fadeth not away." The hope of such a glory affords to the Christian, at certain seasons, unspeakable happiness even here; puts out the false glare of the world; arms him against its allurements or discouragements, and brightens even the valley of the shadow of death: but the full feast of anticipation, the consummate beatitude of hope, is reserved for those who shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

Such, then, Christian brethren, are the leading ideas of this great and interesting theme, as suggested by the terms of the text. But fidelity obliges me to add, in conclusion, that this glorious prospect has a dark contrasted counterpart. Our Lord, in the immediate context, warns us that "the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!" And who are these unhappy "children of the kingdom?" They are those who, like the unbelieving Jews, to whom our Lord made a primary reference, and whose rejection of the gospel opened the way for "many to come from the east and west" into the Church of Christ;

those among ourselves, brethren, who, similarly surrounded with religious privileges, deceive themselves with a merely nominal and formal religion, while their hearts are estranged from the Spirit of God, from love to Christ, and desire of "a better country, that is a heavenly." How dreadful for such to see the men of Nineveh rising up, as accusing witnesses, against themselves, as false, unfruitful professors of the Christian name and faith! How intolerable for such to see a poor Syrophœnician woman, or a Roman centurion, called to join that happy assembly! to see pious relatives and acquaintances, faithful instructers, and many an afflicted Lazarus, admitted to the beatific presence of Christ; but to find themselves, the fancied "children of the kingdom," excluded forever!

Can we need argument to urge our earnest avoidance of such a destiny; our diligent watchfulness, lest we should seem to come short of the grace of God; our faithful repentance from all dead works; our cordial and obedient acceptance of the Saviour? Can we need entreaty to press forward, in the narrow way, to the prize of our high calling, our admission to the eternal festival of the whole family of God?

And, as Christians, let us be moved, by the expectation of our heavenly home, to cherish the spirit of union; and, instead of mutually receding, to draw closer to each other in the bonds of brotherly love. How strange, how unnatural, that there should subsist any distance or antipathy on earth, among those who profess themselves to be candidates for one celestial society, expectants of an eternal union above! In a word, let us be followers of those who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises; followers of those pious patriarchs, named in the text, who sought a better country; children of Abraham, Israelites indeed! Encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and run with patience our appointed race, looking unto Jesus, the Divine Forerunner, that, with the many who have come from the east and the west, we also may be favoured to sit down in the kingdom of heaven; and there to ascribe our entire redemption from the ruins of our fall to the united love, grace, and fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! Amen.

XLVIII.

PRESENT SUFFERINGS CONTRASTED WITH FUTURE GLORY.*

ROMANS, viii., 18: *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.*

[Preached at Hope Chapel, Clifton, April, 1830.]

IT is a saying as ancient as the book of Job—supposed to be the most ancient book in the Bible—that "man is born to trouble:"

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

suffering is the natural inheritance of sin. And Christians, while they are exposed to various afflictions "common to man," have trials peculiar to themselves—trials often pungent and severe. They have need of affliction, as they "have need of patience." "The Father of our spirits chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness." But Christians have, also, consolations peculiar to themselves, and proportioned to their sorrows. These are displayed in every part of the Bible; and, perhaps, in no part more remarkably than in that eminent chapter from which the text is taken. There the apostle, having spoken of the present privileges and comforts of Christians arising from the pardon of sin, the principle of a new life, the inward witness of the Spirit of adoption, which is the earnest of our inheritance, opens the future scene to the view of Christian hope. Here he appears to labour for expressions adequate to represent the riches of its glory: a subject which far exceeds the conception of the most vigorous and elevated imagination. He portrays "the whole creation as waiting" with earnest desire "for the manifestation of the sons of God"—the final consummation of the Christian's happiness; and he finishes and crowns his inspired description with that burst of rapturous assurance, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, principalities or power, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord!"

In the text the apostle represents himself as having instituted a comparison between "the sufferings of this present time" and "the glory that shall be revealed;" a comparison, he means, between the magnitude of each; for between the nature there could be none—"sufferings," in their nature, being a perfect contrast to "glory." He had compared them, each with the other, with his eye on their respective magnitudes; and the result of his comparison he states as being, that "the sufferings are not worthy to be regarded in comparison with the glory." "I reckon," he says, using a word which denotes that he had reasoned upon the subject, and arrived at a deliberate conclusion: "I have calculated the amount, or balanced the weight, of both; and this is my matured conviction."

Now there are two circumstances which greatly confirm and commend the apostle's authority on this subject:

1. First, the large experience he had received of present afflictions. We are accustomed to attach weight to the opinions of those who have had much experience in the things of which they speak: we give credit, on the subject of sufferings, to the testimony of those who are known to have suffered much themselves. The Apostle Paul was eminently such a person; there are few kinds of affliction which he had not largely experienced. You remember what an affecting catalogue of his own diversified sufferings he gives us in his second epistle to the Corinthians (the

11th chapter), where he describes himself as encompassed with labours, stripes, prisons, deaths, perils of every name, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness. He was the very mark for malice—the man against whom, from the time he became a Christian, the sharpest arrows of persecution were directed. Possessing a peculiarly sensitive mind, he acutely felt his own sorrows, and, by sympathy, those of others. "Who," said he, "is weak, and I am not weak?" Of him, in short, it may be truly said, as it is said of his Divine Master, "He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Such a man deserves to be regarded as an oracle on the subject of afflictions; he is qualified to estimate them in their real magnitude. Yet, with this enlarged experience, he declares that the present sufferings of Christians are "not worthy to be compared" with their future glory. It appears, indeed, as though, in writing the text, the apostle had his eye particularly turned to the extraordinary sufferings of Christians in the time *then* present—sufferings so extraordinary, that the common trials of Christians, in these easy days of religious profession, are scarcely more worthy to be compared with them, than they, in respect to their degree and duration, were worthy to be compared with the happiness of heaven. What, my Christian brethren, are our sufferings at this present time, in comparison with those of St. Paul and his brethren? If, then, those greater afflictions, much more our smaller trials, vanish in such a contrast. The comparison appeals to ourselves with augmented force.

2. And, secondly, in respect to the other side of the comparison, the apostle had been distinguished, perhaps above all other men, by an anticipated experience of the glory of the future state. He had been caught up into the third heaven, the paradise of God; he had heard unutterable words; had seen as much as flesh and blood could sustain, and more than it is possible for man to describe or imagine; he had experienced a foretaste of celestial glory. His Divine consolations had been as extraordinary as his human sufferings; and, looking at both worlds with this connected and enlarged experience, he pronounces the judgment stated in the text.

Observe, also, the force of the expression, "the glory that shall be revealed." The same emphatic expression is used by the Apostle Peter, who, apparently alluding to the very words before us,* speaks of himself as "a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (1 Peter, v., 1). A small and dim reflection of that glory is all that is at present conveyed by Divine revelation—like the glimmering of those distant suns that irradiate infinite space—an infantine perception proportioned to our infantine faculties. The apostle, in the comparison he makes between the powers of his childhood and those of his mature age, points out the very ob-

* Peter is believed to have written his first epistle after the death of Paul.—See MACKNIGHT.

scure, contracted, infantine views of a future state, which are all that we can now attain: "When I was a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish thoughts." Thus we now know only in part; we now see only as in a dim-reflecting mirror: but then we shall know as we are known; then we shall see face to face. It is a glory that must be revealed—that can be discerned only by its own splendour—that can be known only when it shall be entered upon! "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." The light in which the most brilliant imagination represents that glory is pale and dim in comparison with the reality! Yet, while we have only the most inadequate ideas, or, rather, know nothing, of future glory, of "the sufferings of this present time" we possess an impression so vivid and distinct as to give them an undue importance. In looking at the comparison, therefore, we must take into consideration the disadvantages arising from the one side being matter of experience and clearly discernible, while the other side is matter of faith, and placed beyond the power of human conception. The things that are temporal are seen; the sufferings are present: but the things that are eternal are not seen; the glory is to be revealed.

There are, however, certain considerations which will assist us to perceive the force of the apostle's comparison: certain diminishing and alleviating circumstances connected with our present sufferings, which render them unworthy to sustain a comparison, in respect to magnitude, with that contrasted glory which is free from all deductions, from all limitations. Such points of distinction are the following:

1. The sufferings of the present state seldom proceed from the highest source of suffering; in the case of sincere Christians, perhaps never; and hence they are never sufferings of the severest nature. In proportion as suffering is seated in the higher department of the soul, the moral faculty—the conscience—it becomes acute and intense. The corrosions of the mental worm, the pangs of remorse, the terrors of an imagination disturbed and darkened by the sense of guilt, may become far more insupportable than any of those afflictions which arise from outward circumstances, or even bodily causes. "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?"

But the sufferings of a good man, a sincere Christian, cannot, in consistency with his supposed character, flow from this highest source—cannot arise from the horrors of a guilty conscience, the sense of Divine wrath, the despair of Divine mercy, the utter despondency of a soul that sees nothing in futurity but an angry God and eternal wo! The Christian can never know that consummate misery of the mind which has been known by wicked men, and which has sometimes urged them even to shake off the natural desire of life, without a hope beyond it, and to rush into the unknown reality, that they might escape from its appalling prospect!

The afflictions of the present state, as they are connected with the children of God, spring from secondary causes, and bear no proportion to the real possibilities of suffering, to the agonies of a despairing spirit. Compared with these, afflictions of a merely external and circumstantial nature pierce, as it were, only skin deep; they occasion only superficial wounds. We can measure our strength in the contemplation of temporal calamities, but not in the prospect of eternal ruin: of this the bare idea and apprehension is more insufferable than the present pressure of any external distress.

The Christian, whatever sufferings of nature he may be called to sustain, may have peace in his conscience, balm for the keenest pains of the spirit; the edge of suffering is effectually taken off in his experience. His present afflictions are, happily, thus rendered very imperfect. But the future glory, with which his present afflictions are contrasted, is of a nature to fill the soul, to satisfy its highest conceptions, its largest capacities of good. It is a spiritual bliss, adapted to the spiritual part of our being, accompanied, indeed, with a proportionate perfection in all external and secondary sources of enjoyment. "Thou wilt give me," says the Psalmist, "to drink of the river of Thy pleasures!" "In Thy presence is the fulness of joy." "When I behold Thy face, I shall be satisfied."

2. The sufferings of this present time are subject to interruptions and intervals of repose. Human life is a mixed and checkered scene, a variation of light and shade, an interchange of bitter and sweet, of joy and sorrow. The storms of adversity do not prevail through the whole period of the most afflicted life; they are relieved by intervals of calm and sunshine. Even in the early ages of the Christian Church, which we are apt to regard as times of constant, unmitigated persecution, though afflictions and martyrdoms were frequent, yet Christians were indulged with seasons of repose; and thus, in the Acts, we read that, after the death of Stephen and the subsequent persecution which dispersed the apostles, "the churches had rest throughout all Judea and Samaria." "The rod of the wicked does not rest," does not always remain, "upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous, "driven to distrust and despair," should put forth their hand to iniquity."—Psalm cxxv. With regard to individuals, it will be found that their sufferings are not uninterrupted, not continuous. Often, amid the darkest dispensations, suddenly the sun arises, dispels the clouds, and the light of joy returns. It is because our sufferings are thus interrupted, thus occasional, that they become the more conspicuous, and make the deeper impression on our minds: what is common and habitual excites no attention. Health, for example, is the ordinary state of our being; sickness is an interruption of that state, a deviation from it, an exception to the general law. Hence we dwell on, and recur to, a few days or even hours of pain, while we let years of

ease and vigour pass unnoticed: just as, in the system of inanimate nature, storms, inundations, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, are marked as violent exceptions to the ordinary quietness of things. The same remark may be extended to the various afflictions of life: we have large spaces and tracts of enjoyment, while our sufferings are compressed, as it were, into particular spots of time. In this point of view our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with "the glory to be revealed." In the heavenly world there is no suspension of good, no interruption of happiness, no intrusion of distress, bodily or mental, no spaces of enjoyment distinguishable from other scenes of a different aspect. "There shall be no more pain, nor sorrow, nor death;" "the sun shall no more go down, nor the moon withdraw itself, for the Lord God shall be the light of that world, and the redeemed shall live and reign as kings forever and ever." There will prevail an unbroken continuity of bliss. The river of life will flow on without interruption to those waters, "clear as crystal," which proceed from the throne of God and the Lamb. Who would compare the occasional sufferings of this present time with the enjoyment of a perpetual element of undisturbed felicity?

3. While we continue here, the sufferings incident to our nature are attended by many alleviating and mitigating circumstances, much that may contribute to soothe the sufferer. None of our afflictions touch us at once in all points, wound all our sensibilities, lay hold on all our sympathies, put an end to every enjoyment. "God does not stir up all his wrath, but in wrath remembers mercy."—Psalm lxxviii. Habak., iii. "He stays his rough wind in the day of the east wind."—Isaiah, xxvii. "He knows our frame, and remembers we are dust."—Psalm ciii. "He corrects us in measure."—Jer., xxx. He attempers his chastisements to our weakness; and, in general, so mingles goodness with severity, as, even amid our sorrows, to call forth our thanksgivings. If He takes away the desire of our eyes with a stroke, He leaves us, perhaps, the olive-branches round our table. If our bereavement is not thus allayed, if our health and ease are impaired, if pain or sickness is sent, we are often attended by kind friends, who sympathize in our sufferings and anticipate our wants; we have all the assistance which the physician's art can afford for our need, and, for the support of our hearts, the rich promises of Scripture, the hope of a happy immortality, the tranquillizing influences of the Divine Comforter, never more largely dispensed than when most needed. "He makes all our bed in our sickness;" "He knows our soul in adversity." In short, we are always surrounded by a variety of objects adapted to soothe and cheer us. It was when John was insulated as a prisoner in Patmos that he was illuminated with visions of glory; he was separated from his Christian brethren that he might be associated with angels, Christ, and God! He saw heaven opened, and the

Lamb in the midst of the throne! He heard the new song, and the voice of harpers harping with their harps! But in the future state of glory there is no admixture of suffering; it is a state of pure fruition, a scene of unimpaired beatitude; it leaves no room for consolation, none for compassion. In reference to that state, He that sits on the throne has declared, "Behold, I make all things new." With the perfect nature of that glory, the very imperfect nature of our present sufferings, as modified by many alleviating circumstances, renders them not worthy to be compared.

4. Besides which, let it be observed, in the fourth place, that, even when we may be reduced to a situation of the greatest possible distress, still we retain a certain principle of our nature, which preserves us from sinking into despair. There is implanted in our mind the mysterious principle of hope, which operates with an antagonist and resisting force against the assaults of adversity. By a benevolent law of our Creator, there is a certain activity in the imagination, which, under the pressure of sorrow, turns the mind of the sufferer to prospects of future ease or happiness. How vigorous is this faculty in youth! what a buoyancy and elasticity does it give to the mind! And, though it may be impaired and weakened by the experience of repeated disappointments, yet it is never entirely lost, not even with regard to worldly objects: it acts with the constant presence and energy of a law of nature, preserves the most afflicted, all who are not utterly abandoned by the Spirit of God, from sinking into utter despair, and enables them to spring upward from the pressure of their burden. And what a source of joy does this principle open to the Christian! It is one of the vital elements of the Christian religion. As the apostle says, in connexion with the text, "we are saved by hope;" while elsewhere he defines our faith as "the substance (the realizing) of things hoped for." What a counteraction to the power of present sufferings, what a deduction from their completeness, is thus supplied! But hence the comparison fails between them and the future glory. In the happiness of heaven there exists no disturbing fear to correspond with the hope that allays the sufferings of time; the very thought of a cessation to that glory would diffuse a gloom over its brightness, would prove an ingredient of bitterness in that overflowing cup of joy. There we shall be no more exposed to vicissitude and trial; changes will have been all passed through, trials removed; sufferings will there be lost, not only in presence, but even in apprehension; death will be swallowed up in victory. If once admitted to that bright world, we shall look back on "the sufferings of this present time," as on the faint recollection of a vision of the night: they will only serve to enhance our beatitude, to swell our song of praise!

5. In the fifth place, there is another very important consideration, but one to which it is impossible to do justice, in attempt-

ing to show how unworthy are the sufferings of time to be compared with the glories of eternity. It is this: that the present sufferings are proportioned to our present powers of enduring; but the glories of the future world, to another state of faculties, a very different order of capacities. At the resurrection there will take place a great, an inconceivable enlargement of our energies in mind and body, our capacities of action and enjoyment. When Jesus Christ shall have subdued all enemies, and death the last of all, then will He deliver up the kingdom to the Father, perfect and complete. With respect to the body, we know that it will be changed in such a manner that it will be rendered meet to enter heaven. Of this mysterious change, the Apostle Paul has given a sublime description: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body; there is a natural, and there is a spiritual body; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: but when the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."—1 Cor., xv. Our bodies, now so frail, composed of dust, and soon decomposed into dust, shall be transfigured into the likeness of that glorified body of Jesus Christ, which John in his vision beheld, and the brightness of which caused him such fear, that, if he had not been instantly supported by the agent of his emotion, he must have sunk under it in death! "Then shall the righteous," clothed with such a body, "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

With respect to mental powers, there will take place a corresponding expansion. The intellect will be enlarged in proportion to the enlarged sphere in which it is to expatiate, and knowledge will proportionally pour in upon the mind. The apostle illustrates the vast superiority of the future state, as compared with the present, in respect to knowledge and intellect, by the superiority that now exists in the enlarged faculties and views of manhood, as compared with the very limited powers and ideas of children: "When I was a child, I understood as a child." Here we are in our infancy of mind and knowledge: the intelligence even of a Newton, which here seems to border on angelic intuition, would there, it is probable, appear rather as an infantine than a matured intelligence: we know nothing but in part, and that part but as in a dark reflection. Above all, we entertain most imperfect and vague conceptions of "the glory to be revealed:" even the inspired and highly-favoured Apostle John was compelled to say, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." That state can be known only by the light of eternity. We have not powers to comprehend, nor capacities to enjoy it. Were an angel to descend from that state, and give us a glimpse of his brightness, like the apostle, we should fall at his feet as dead.

Under the exceeding weight of that eternal glory, we should swoon and die away; our small measures could not contain that "fulness of joy." There the vessel will be inconceivably dilated; the body will be "raised in power," like that of angels who "excel in strength," endued with immortal vigour—with adamantine energy; the eye will be strengthened to behold those beams of Divine effulgence which, were they to be manifested to us now, would blind us with their blaze—would sink us, dazzled and astounded, to the earth, like Saul on his way to Damascus! The ear will be fitted to receive, the voice to respond, those eternal hallelujahs! Every cloud will be dispelled from the mind; every imperfection of its powers removed: "we shall see face to face, and know as we are known." There will exist a totally different scale of faculties, adapted to the magnitude of the objects to be comprehended—to the inconceivable splendours of the beatific vision! What are the very limited sufferings of this present time, proportioned as they always are to our present very limited powers of sustaining? what, placed in comparison with that ineffable glory of the future world to which powers of a different order are adapted—powers expanded in proportion to the surpassing greatness of their objects?

6. And once more, as the sixth and last point of this most unequal comparison, we must never lose sight of the immeasurable disparity that subsists between the duration of temporal afflictions and the duration of celestial glory. Sufferings, as we have before observed, attach to only a small portion of our present small existence. In very few cases can they be supposed to form the larger part of even this transitory life; but if they extended through the whole period, and that period were protracted to antediluvian longevity, still they would be lost in a moment, less than a moment, in comparison with eternal glories. Weighed against that "exceeding weight," these light afflictions would appear as the small dust of the balance—as the almost invisible motes of the sunbeam. Eternity, as we are sensible, is an idea too immense for our conception; it baffles the grasp of the most gigantic human intellect: on the margin of that ocean we can only exclaim, with the apostle, "Oh, the depth!" We can realize the idea of eternity only by feeling our utter inability to realize it; we can estimate it only by knowing that it cannot be estimated—that it is, like the eternal God, incomprehensible! "This present time," especially as restricted to the life of individuals, when compared with endless duration, resembles an atom compared with the universe! With the eternal God the most distant periods of time coalesce; they meet in the same point: the creation and the last judgment, the beginning and the end of time, succeed to each other as the morning succeeds to the night, while the whole intervening lapse of duration passes as merely a watch in the night!

Whether the happiness of glorified spirits is possessed in its

full extent at once, on their first admission into heaven, or whether it is continually progressive as towards a goal, we cannot determine. Doubtless, from the very commencement of that state, there is a fulness of joy—a sense of perfect bliss; and yet, in all probability, this is only the introduction to a continued, interminable progression in glory—an everlasting approximation of the soul towards its Divine centre, "the only happy God." Be this as it may, the state itself is fixed and eternal. And for this state we, my brethren, are candidates; for this glory we should be earnest aspirants: of this "inheritance that fadeth not away" we are all, by the redeeming grace of God, called to be the happy expectants. Man is born for eternity: every individual bears within him a never-dying spirit—a spark of immortality that must forever burn, either in the flames of righteous indignation, or in the ardours of Divine love: an incorruptible, unfading inheritance is reserved for the redeemed. "I give unto my sheep," says the good Shepherd, "eternal life:" amid the decay and dissolution of all around, "they shall never perish; they shall receive eternal life!"

Such are a few thoughts, on a subject of peculiar interest, as it embraces at once the present and the future state of pious individuals, which may serve as hints for serious and consolatory meditation. By way of a brief improvement of what has been presented, first, let Christians derive support and encouragement under the various afflictions to which they may be subjected in their passage through the present world. When we are ready to be cast down overmuch by some pressing burden, let us endeavour to estimate that burden in its real momentary lightness, by balancing it, like the apostle, against an "eternal weight of glory." The smallest objects, when gazed at apart from greater, assume a disproportionate importance; but survey them in comparison with those greater objects, and how strangely they shrink into their proper littleness! To the eye of Christian faith, which looks at what is seen and temporal by the light of what is unseen and eternal, the darkest clouds of present sufferings appear, as it were, irradiated with a reflection of that glory which will ere long break forth from their gloom, to shine and brighten through an endless day. One glimpse of that glory, we feel assured, would put out all these little clouds from our view or remembrance! Let us aim to walk by faith, and not by sight; and in our trials, to realize the well-grounded conviction, "these sufferings of time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed" when time shall be lost in eternity!

Secondly, and lastly: let others, who may not as yet have turned their attention to eternal realities, be prevailed upon no longer to neglect the great salvation. Instead of burying a soul destined for immortality and bliss, in a state tarnished at once with sufferings and decay, awake, my brethren, to the dignity of your high calling! arise, to seek your just inheritance in that glory with

which neither the sorrows nor the pleasures of this present time are worthy of a moment's comparison! Who would hesitate between a few years of doubtful enjoyment, invaded by sufferings "common to man," and inconceivable happiness, prolonged and progressive through infinite duration? Delay not this, your prime concern, till the less convenient season of a deathbed may overtake you unprepared. The languor of the sinking frame, the eclipse of declining reason, are not the condition in which we may first enter on the earnest contemplation of eternal glory! It is sufficient for human nature to grapple with pain, and decay, and the last enemy. How few, at such a moment, have the fortitude to examine their state! how few the opportunity to make their peace with God! Seek now an interest in "the common salvation!" Now is the accepted time; now is the convenient season. While all around is mutable, unstable, and we can fix on nothing that does not escape from our eager grasp, lay hold on Jesus Christ, the Rock of ages! While all beside is carried away by the irresistible tide of vanity and corruption, secure that inestimable deposite which will exist forever in the hands of Him who is able to keep it against the day of his appearance and glory! Come to the Saviour just as you are; if you were to wait to all eternity, you would be no better prepared, by any efforts of your own, for his acceptance. All power is given to Him; He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him: whosoever will, let him come to Christ; and thus be prepared, by his grace and power, to exchange the light affliction, which is for a moment, for an exceeding and eternal weight of glory!*

XLIX.

STRENGTH IN TRIALS.†

DEUTERONOMY, xxxiii., 25: *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day morning, January 16, 1831.]

THE Jewish Church was a type of the Christian Church. Hence, says the Apostle Paul, after enumerating several particulars, "Now these things were our examples, and they are written for our admonition."

The word τυποι, rendered examples, signifies models or types.

* The sermon closed with a very affecting reference to the pious character and pastoral faithfulness of the deceased minister, and with a tribute of sympathy and consolation to his widow and his flock. In such passages Mr. Hall's generous sensibility qualified him peculiarly to excel; but he was prevented by declining health from complying with a request to prepare for the press the admirable discourse which I have thus attempted to rescue from oblivion. The Rev. W. H. Guy, to whose memory this funeral honour was assigned, expired on April 1, 1830, in his thirty-first year, after a ministry of ten years in Hope Chapel, Clifton.—GRINFIELD.

† From the notes of the Rev. John Eyres.

The various deliverances the Divine Being wrought for his people, the services in which they engaged, and the sacrifices they offered, were for our learning. The promises, also, which they received, and comforts given them, were designed for us, if we fear God, "that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." Let us, therefore, endeavour to unfold the meaning of these words, written by Moses, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be," and impart from them some consolation.

In doing this, we shall make three observations.

I. That the true Israel of God are called to tread in rough paths, and endure heavy trials.

II. That in the prospect of these things they are apt to be dismayed.

III. That although their trials are great, they may expect all-sufficient strength.

I. We shall endeavour to show that the people of God are called to tread in rough paths, and experience trials which, in an absolute sense, are heavy in their nature. Had not his people of old been called to pass through difficult paths, there would have been no propriety in adopting the words of our text. The allusion, probably, is to the hard soil of the wilderness through which they had to pass to the promised land. It is called the "terrible wilderness," and "a waste, howling wilderness, wherein there was no water." Thy shoes, therefore, says Moses, shall be iron and brass.

This figure we shall take and compare to the trials of God's children. These trials have not been confined to one age or nation. In every age God's children have been peculiarly tried; sometimes their trials have been of a very complicated nature, arising from various sources—from pain of body, depression of mind, family bereavements, losses in business, temptations, poverty, and persecution; so that they have appeared almost too heavy to be endured. Under their pressure Moses wished to die. David said, "Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not thyself from my supplications. My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me; fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest." The language of Asaph is of the same purport: "Will the Lord cast off forever, and will He be favourable no more?" In the wilderness the Israelites were led backward and forward. Trials attended them through all their journeyings. Look, also, at our blessed Redeemer, the pattern and leader of his people. Think of his trials and sufferings; and how light are ours when compared with his! Thus, then, my dear brethren, we perceive, by the case of the children of Israel, the promises of God, by the experience of the faithful in different ages, and by Him who was in all points tried as we are, that we must expect heavy trials in this world.

II. And now, in the second place, you will observe, that in the prospect of sufferings and trials, we are apt to be dismayed. The promise in our text is applicable not merely to the present, but also to the future. It relates not only to the trials we are enduring, but to those

we have in prospect. Some we have passed through, others we are now enduring, but there are more in prospect. In reference, then, to anticipated trials, we are too prone to be dismayed and cast down in our minds. This was the case with the children of Israel : notwithstanding the blessings they had received and the promises given them, they were dismayed ; though their shoes were to be as "iron and brass," " they were discouraged because of the way."

The Israelites were not alone in this. God's people in every age have been exercised in a similar manner ; they have been brought to the last extremity, and have not known what to do. It was in the prospect of trials that Elijah, distressed in mind, sat down under a juniper-tree, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, " It is enough : now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." And we may be sure that the Apostle Paul was the subject of perplexity when he thus expressed his feelings : "And now behold, I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city that bonds and affliction await me." Though he did not despair of the grace of God, he was perplexed ; though not destroyed, he was cast down. Our blessed Redeemer himself, also, was so dismayed that he prayed that the cup, if possible, might be removed from Him.

Then, my dear brethren, recollect, that no new trial has happened to you. It is not an uncommon thing that you should be tried, but such as all who are now in heaven knew something of. They came out of great tribulation. Nor are you to think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you. Be not too much cast down and dismayed in prospect of trial. He in whom you trust is able to make all grace to abound, and work all things together for your good.

III. And we shall now endeavour, in the next place, to show you the ground of your encouragement. For, although your trials may be great, you are to expect strength that shall be adequate to all your wants. " *Thy* shoes," says God, " shall be iron and brass ;" " as *thy* days so shall *thy* strength be." The meaning of which is, that all seasonable succour and support shall be equal to the trials and exigencies of every day.

Pious men have found this to be the case through all generations. They have had their days of persecution, days of affliction, days of want. They have had seasons of temptation, of darkness, and of duty ; but seasonable and suitable strength has been received ; their strength has been in proportion to their day ; so that they have not really been in want of any thing for their good. So it is with the Christian now. His heavenly Father says, " When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow ; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Weep not, then, Christian ; be not discouraged at what you have now to endure, or at what you have in prospect ; you have more for you than against you. God is with you as your upholder, governor, and benefactor ; and as a mother comforteth her children, so will He comfort his people.

You see, then, my dear brethren, that we are not to be over anxious about the future; if you have sufficient for the present, fear not that which may never take place. "Take no thought," no anxious, distressing, harassing thought, "for the morrow." Suffer not your minds to be torn asunder by doubt or apprehension. Consider, rather, what is the present will of God, and rest satisfied and content without anticipating evils which may never arrive.

Do not heighten your present sorrows by a morbid imagination. You know not what a day may bring forth. The future is likely to be better than you expect, as well as worse. The real victory of Christians arises from attention to present duty. This carries them from strength to strength.

Some are alarmed at the thought of death. They say, How shall I meet the agonies of dissolution? But when you are called to die, you will, if among God's children, receive dying consolation. Be satisfied if you have the strength to live to God, and God will support you when you come to die. Some fear persecution, lest, at such a season, they should make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be."

Consider to what it is we owe our success. If we are nearer our salvation than when we believed, let us not ascribe it to ourselves, to our own arm, but to the grace of God. Not I, but the grace of God with me, enabling me to sustain and to conquer. If we continue, it is because we have obtained help of God; we are kept by his mighty power unto salvation. In all our sufferings, if Christians, we are perpetually indebted to Divine succour.

Let us habitually look up to God in the exercise of faith and prayer. Instead of yielding ourselves to dejection, let us plead the promises, and flee to the Divine word. He has been accustomed to sustain the faithful, and He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He is never weary. Look to Him. They that wait on Him shall mount up with eagles' wings, run and not be weary, walk and not faint. Go to Him in prayer—cling to his strength—lay hold of his arm. You have a powerful Redeemer. Be strong in the power of his might. Draw down the succours of his grace, which will enable you to go on "from strength to strength, until you appear before God in Zion."

L.

ABRAHAM AND LOT.*

GENESIS, xiii., 7–13: *And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle. And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.*

[Preached at Cambridge, February 7, 1802.]

IN early times no one appears to have appropriated any thing to himself but what was for his own immediate use. When the number of the inhabitants of the earth were few, its spontaneous productions, with the animals then alive, were sufficient for them; but in process of time this mode of subsistence became more precarious. This suggested the increase of their stock, to which they might have recourse in time of need, and occasioned the introduction of the plan of rearing animals. Hence we read of their herds and flocks; and their riches are described to us by the number of cattle, sheep, and different animals in their possession. Thus we learn the riches of Lot and of Abraham. Their occupation was chiefly in attending their flocks, that they might choose such districts of pasture as were suitable to them. The cultivation of the soil in those days was not common. Genesis, xxvi., 12th verse, it is said of Isaac, that he sowed seed in that land. It is mentioned as a remarkable circumstance, as being a transition from the pastoral to the agricultural state. We do not find in any writings of this time, that the "seed time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not cease." In this simple state, while rearing cattle and tending their flocks, the venerable patriarchs passed their lives. Abraham and Lot had both large stocks of cattle, but the land was barren, so that they could not dwell together; this occasioned the circumstance which is the foundation of the history here recorded "There arose a strife between the herdmen of Lot and the herdmen

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

of Abraham" about their respective rights of pasture. The Canaanites and the Perizzites, who were afterward destroyed by the descendants of Abraham, we are informed, dwelt in the land. "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar."

This conduct of Abraham affords us several important instructions. First, Abraham had a great disposition to cultivate peace with his countryman, Lot. "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, for we be brethren." Such reasons will apply in many cases. They were not properly brethren, Abraham being Lot's uncle; but the Jews were accustomed to extend that relationship to those whose kindred were not very remote. In members of families, and in domestic and social life, every thing like strife, contention, or discord, should be extinguished by this sentiment, and the recollection of "we are brethren." God has been pleased to form families as an asylum and refuge in the midst of this desert world. Man fixes his eye on one humble roof, where all that is sweet and endearing is concentrated; where, if all the world are enemies, he knows there are those who will feel affection for, and pay attention to, him. How important is it that peace should be preserved, especially in families! Abraham knew the value of it, surrounded, as he was, by those who were indifferent, if not enemies, to him. Christianity takes men up as families, for there never was but one true religion, of which Christianity is the completion. It takes them under its patronage, animates them by the most endearing relationship, exhorts husbands to love their wives, and wives their husbands, children to obey their parents, and parents to love their children. What is the tendency of all these precepts, but to preserve that peace and affection, which is the bond and cement of domestic society, and which, with such near connexions, should remove all sources of discord and disunion? Let a sense of the bond of kindred induce all families to cultivate peace, and to propose this sentiment, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me; for we be brethren." As Christians, this may be extended much farther. If it be true that *they* were brethren after the flesh, Christians are such after the spirit. They have drank into one spirit; "they have one Lord, one faith, one baptism;" nay, more, they are members of one body, of that sacred family in which God chooses to dwell, and in which He will dwell. How important, then, is it that Christians should cultivate this friendly spirit! Occasions of difference will spring up in the midst of them, especially in the present imperfect manner in which they are, as societies, constituted; but the time will come when they will "see eye to eye," and arrive at the

"stature and fulness of a perfect man in Christ Jesus;" "when Ephraim will no longer envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim." In the mean time, this consideration should be sufficient to remove all discord and contention, "We are brethren." But why, even now, should not those who serve the same master, and look for the same home and final blessedness, act the part of Abraham? There is room enough for all those different professions and denominations into which the Christian world is divided. Separation may, in some cases, be unavoidable; but why not part in love? "Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me," says Abraham; "if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." And what was the reason assigned? Because "the land could not bear them." Abraham and Lot were not enemies: this circumstance did not bring any disunion of heart. There has been, my brethren, unhappily, in all sects and parties of Christians, a disposition to strife and envy; to quarrel, and even to anathematize one another; to *confine* and arrogate to themselves the title of the "true Church;" as if the Church of Christ could be limited to any one assembly. I had almost rather reject Christianity itself, than thus narrow the limits of the great Creator within such artificial and bigoted distinctions. For we know that God, "who made all nations of one flesh," and sanctified them one nature that which is common in form, and who has redeemed all, "will gather from every nation and kingdom under heaven those that fear God and work righteousness." For "many shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and be presented faultless before the throne of God and the Lamb." We have seen in the character of Abraham a great love of peace; but there is more than this to be learned in his example.

Secondly. There was a great degree of humility and condescension in the father of the faithful. He was the head and progenitor, not of one nation only, but of a multitude of nations, "whom all nations call blessed." He was favoured with two distinct revelations from God. Lot, in comparison with him, was a very inferior person. He came into the land under Abraham's protection. He was his inferior in age, inferior in riches and dignity, inferior in favour both of God and man. We read that Abraham was "a mighty prince;" yet his humility and condescension were very conspicuous. In addressing himself to Lot, we observe he yields where he might command; refers the choice where he had the highest pretensions to decide. He tells him that he would direct himself to that course which Lot might choose to abandon. Let the simple feeling of nature determine whether this was a degrading humility.

This disposition of Abraham, if acted upon, would remove all painful distance, and make greatness amiable, instead of being a terror. Persons of rank would be looked up to as superiors; as refuges, ensamples, and guides, rather than as enemies. This was the conduct of Abraham, and no doubt it left its impression on the mind of Lot.

Is it not better to make friends than enemies? For though no being but God can make you happy, every being may make you miserable. The most eminent saints have been eminent for humility. This is both an effect and cause of a participation of the Divine Spirit; they all drank into one Spirit, as water from the same rock. A man is never so likely to be exalted by God as when he is least in his own eyes; for "thus saith the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy, to that man will I look, yea, with him will I dwell, who is poor, and of an humble and contrite spirit."

Thirdly. We see in the character of Abraham an amiable moderation with respect to worldly things. He was rich, and increased in riches, but he never suffered his affections to fasten on these as his supreme good. He knew how to receive that degree of enjoyment from them they were designed to afford, without sensuality, and without being insensible to God as the giver. He acted like a patriarch. He confessed himself a pilgrim and a sojourner in the earth; he "sought a city which had foundations, a heavenly country." Do any of you, my brethren, wish to obtain this spirit? It is only a devotedness to God, a contemplation of eternity, a hope full of immortality, that can purify the heart from worldly-mindedness, and give you life and peace.

Fourthly. We have, in the next place, in the conduct of Abraham, a very diligent observance of all the modes of civility, urbanity, and decorum. He says, "If thou wilt go the left, I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right, then I will go to the left." Here is a manly politeness to Lot, a disposition to oblige. He studiously avoids all expression of authority, of haughtiness, or superiority; yet there is nothing flattering or mean, but great dignity. This shines with still greater lustre as it appears in his conduct to the angels (chap. xviii., verse 3, 4, 5). What cheerful hospitality to strangers! He makes it a favour that they would accept of his hospitality. He runs to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, "My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on."

This part of his conduct appears again in the xxiii. chapter, verse 7th. In purchasing the field of the children of Heth, "Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth," which was the strongest expression of homage in that country he could pay. Though he had received their own land in prophecy, "yet he bowed himself down to the children of Heth." Nay, though he knew that they were excluded by God for their idolatry, yet "he bowed himself down to the children of Heth." Spiritual pride may dispose a man to assume a kind of superiority in manner and bearing, like the Pharisee, who said, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou;" but the father of the faithful was of a different spirit: he "bowed himself down to the children of Heth." Christianity, my brethren, teaches us that degree of civility and decorum of which mere worldly politeness is but the shadow. This we are expressly

taught by every precept in the New Testament, that we are to treat no person with scorn, or haughtiness, or derision.

We should be equally careful to avoid a spirit that would lead us to trample on our inferiors, from a mean desire of being thought what God has never designed or made us to be. Study, my brethren, a lovely behaviour; and not only whatsoever is lovely, but whatsoever gives dignity and grace to piety.

We have seen what is remarkable in the conduct of Abraham; we shall now attend to the conduct of Lot. It was exceedingly wrong, on the part of Lot, not to refer to Abraham the alternative of that choice which he was pleased to offer him. This was an error, however, only in form with respect to decorum and disposition; but how did he act? We read, "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east, and they separated one from another." Now, though the inspired historian has not given us an express censure, yet they must read the Scriptures with very little attention who do not see that the conduct of Lot was exceedingly blamable; that he chose more from the fertility of the soil, than from any regard for the preservation of his virtue and character. The people of Sodom he knew "were wicked before the Lord;" but he saw the plain of Jordan afforded numerous districts of pasturage for his herds and cattle. Here the conduct of Lot affords us as instructive a lesson as did that of Abraham. We find he was soon carried into captivity, and might have perished there but for the generous interposition of Abraham.

When he afterward established himself in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, he was stripped of all his property, and fled for his life to the city of Zoar; not, however, to dwell in that place, but he retired to a cave, and there he appears to have ended his days in obscurity. We find there was nothing to distinguish him. Now this shows the great importance of paying attention to situations, as to the influence they may have upon character, and not the advantages of a worldly kind merely. It is very common for persons to place themselves in circumstances where they know their virtue will be endangered. They who are the most indisposed to encounter temptation, we find, are the most virtuous. Abraham was much more virtuous than Lot, but he had determined not to pitch *his* tent towards Sodom. Tremble at that condition or place, my brethren, which endangers your virtue. How wise was that choice of Moses, "who forsook all the pleasures of Egypt, by faith choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which were but for a season!" For what can recompense you for the loss of your souls?

This part of the subject, my brethren, furnishes an important lesson to parents, in the choice of a profession, or in the establishment of young people in life. Parents do not always consider the probable influence and effect of certain connexions and situations on the habits of their children. They appear to come to this conclusion, that they

are themselves Christians, but that their children have no souls to be saved. The children of Lot, we read, were corrupted and ruined by their intercourse with the people of Sodom. What can be expected but evil, if young persons are exposed to the filthy conversation of the wicked? "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Can a man take fire in his bosom and not be burned? Even Lot himself appears to have been corrupted; for he was first betrayed into drunkenness, then, as sin seldom comes alone, into incest. He lost, first, his innocence, then all that property for the sake of which he sacrificed it.

Fix it, my brethren, in your minds, that children are a sacred trust, that God will ask an account of your children. The curse of God was on the house of Eli, "because they made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." If your example has encouraged vice in them, how dreadful will it be to have accusers start up from such unexpected quarters, and before the eternal God, call upon you who have been accessories to their ruin! Better to have rocks and mountains to fall upon you, and cover you, than the wrath of the Almighty. But how, you may ask, is this evil to be avoided? It is by making a regard to the salvation of their souls the chief object. It is this, and *this* alone, which is an antidote to this evil. You are to teach them that it will not profit them, though they may gain the whole world, and lose their souls; for what can they give in exchange for their souls? You are to impress upon them that worldly riches and honours are fleeting distinctions; and under the influence of these sentiments, which include some of the first principles of Christianity, you will be more pleased to see your children in humble situations, rather than in the highest stations while they are strangers to God.

Here are plain marks of the visitation of God. Lot sacrificed his safety, and chose to expose himself to the "conversation of wicked men," and God was pleased to strip him of all his wealth: "the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." It appears he was "*vexed* with the conversation of the wicked." The words are full of instruction. He escaped for his life. He is snatched as a brand from the burning. There is a secret sense of uneasiness rests upon the mind of a good man at the sight of injustice, wickedness, inhumanity, and neglect of God, that must destroy all his enjoyments; while that wealth which God bestows is enjoyed with a mild and peaceful conscience; and be assured, if God, by his blessings, does not make you rich, all will be in vain to make you happy. Lot was stripped of his wealth, while Abraham, without anxiety or vexation, went on from prosperity to prosperity, till he waxed great indeed. Let us never depart, my brethren, from duty: "They that will be rich fall into a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." A lively sense and persuasion of the recompense of reward will efface all such sophistry. He that hath food and raiment has every reason to be content.

We are informed, by the Apostle Peter, that Lot, with all his imperfections, was a good man, which we should not have learned from

this history. Some Christians rise to the stature and dignity of Abraham, while others remain as low as Lot. The Scriptures, we see in their narratives, exhibit to us different degrees of religious attainment. Lot was vexed by his intercourse with the wicked inhabitants of Sodom. The effect of such society is either to vex or corrupt, to disgust or destroy our virtues, by assimilating our manners to theirs. A good man, if he connects himself with scoffers, may, perhaps, get over the first uneasy impression made by their company; but if his virtue remain unshaken, he will find himself distressed by the continuance of their vain and wicked conversation. But how difficult is it, my brethren, to associate with persons of this description, and not to lose something of a conscientious fear of God; to relax somewhat of delicacy of mind and feeling. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." You may be ready to confide in your own virtue; but the apostle says, "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners." Finally, my brethren, we see in these two persons, that the conduct of parents descends, in its effects, very far into their posterity. Abraham, by his piety, transmitted his religion to his descendants; while in those of Lot we find no disposition to it. Well! Abraham is great in this world, and he is great in heaven; for we read that the highest happiness of the saints is represented to us by our Saviour, in parable, as being found in reclining on Abraham's bosom. Let us all imitate that true greatness, which can be found only in the fear of God; in the freest and fullest devotedness of heart to his service, and a fear of sinning against Him. "Watch and pray," my brethren, "lest ye enter into temptation." "Blessed is that servant who, when his Lord cometh, shall be found so doing;" then shall he hear those consolatory words, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."

LI.

THE CHARACTER OF BALAAM.*

NUMBERS, xxi., 8: *Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, Nov. 5, 1826.]

IT appears from the history of the Israelites, that when they encamped on the borders of Moab, they were tempted, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit whoredom with the daughters of that idolatrous land; and, on this account, the Lord sent a plague on them, which consumed twenty-four thousand persons, and which ceased not its ravages, until Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, had slain two flagrant offenders, and, by his righteous

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

zeal for the honour of God, obtained the high honour of a perpetual priesthood in his family.

Balaam has been supposed by some to have been a prophet of God, who had degenerated by converse with idolaters to become one himself; but it seems more probable that he was a soothsayer or diviner, celebrated for his skill in foretelling future events, and gratifying the desire, so strong in man, to look into futurity; that he was not an idolater, but acknowledged the true God, and having heard the wonderful history of the Israelites, then on their march towards Canaan, was struck with admiration of their exalted privileges, which he so eloquently describes.

With respect to his extraordinary character, there is something so imposing about it, that we are in danger of forming too favourable an opinion of him. There is an enchanting beauty in his prophecies which yields to nothing in the most admired effusions of prophetic inspiration, and which it is impossible to contemplate without emotion: we are scarcely masters of our feelings when we hear such accents as those which were uttered by the son of Beor: "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed, how defy whom the Lord hath not defied? for from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel! Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" This last pathetic exclamation was probably uttered with a sincere desire, and certainly has awakened devotion in thousands since it was penned.

Turning from his prophecies to his actions, we see the semblance at least of a conscientiousness and firmness that we cannot but admire. When the elders of Moab and Midian came to him with the rewards of divination, he refused to go without first consulting God: and having received the Divine prohibition to curse Israel, he resisted the temptation of Balak, saying, "If Balak would give me his house full of gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God." When he did go, the oracles which he uttered expressed, in all probability, "the whole counsel of God," delivered to him: unseduced by bribes, and unawed by authority, he kept nothing back, when "he took up his parable." In his last prediction, he perseveres to the close in declaring the destined felicity and glory of Israel, triumphant over all enemies. So far, then, he appears like a true prophet of God, like one whose heart was right with the Lord.

But when we come to look more narrowly into his character and conduct, we too clearly see that his heart was not right, that it was cankered and corrupt at the core; that he stands as a recorded beacon to warn others against the ruin that attends departure from God, and rebellion against the dictates of conscience. For, first, at the very opening of his intercourse with Balak, we find him hesitating and demurring whether or not he

would curse the people of God. This is the first symptom of evil within. He inquires of God, evidently in the hope that he might be permitted to obtain the object of his covetousness: he receives an express prohibition; but, after yet larger offers have been made, he applies again for the Divine answer, and thus manifestly tempts the Lord. Had his heart been sound, he would have leaned to Israel, and taken side with God's people; but his heart was after its covetousness; he had cast a lingering eye at the rewards of divination. He had been safe if he had firmly resisted; but, by this tampering with conscience, he committed himself to great and unspeakable danger. We are not to expect God to hinder us from the accomplishment of the worst designs; He does not render them impracticable; He often opens the way to wickedness, and suffers the path of crime to be strewed with flowers. We must learn to walk by a standard far more decisive and inflexible than the openings of Providence; we must consult the internal monitor which God has given us, and obey its first and clearest dictates. In matters of prudence, second thoughts are often the best; but in matters of conscience, first thoughts are sure to be our truest guide. Deliberation and demur, so valuable on many occasions, are here most dangerous; reasoning here will only lead us into perilous paths; the moment we attempt to persuade ourselves that something, of which we doubted the rectitude, is allowable, we stand on the brink of a precipice that has been fatal to millions. Balaam affords a striking instance of a very common character, in which some prevailing vice biases the conduct, and keeps back the person from a sincere and entire devotion of himself to the will of God; he is held as by a magic spell; he walks within an enchanted circle; where he is always aiming to reconcile the indulgence of his evil desire with the opposing conviction of his conscience.

But we have yet to come to the worst part of Balaam's conduct. He dared not defy, he felt himself compelled to bless, Israel; and yet he clung to the wages of unrighteousness; he found out an indirect, a circuitous way, as criminal, though not so open, as that of rushing against the thick bosses of God's buckler, for accomplishing the wicked wish of Balak; for causing God to withdraw the very blessing which he celebrated, and impose the very curse which he could not denounce. He seduces Israel to idolatry. He instructs Balak to make a great feast; and, by collecting all the youth and beauty of Moab at this carnival, he allures the people first to fornication, and then, through the medium of their passions, to idolatry; he thus finds a way to rob them of all those privileges which he had so sublimely sung. His conduct in this is a striking instance of self-deceit; he takes not the daring, but the disguised way to sin. God had not said in so many words, you shall not seduce the people; but this was implied in what God had said, and might have been so understood by any person of far less penetration than Balaam.

Such, my brethren, is the darkening, hardening influence of an evil passion cherished within; so wonderfully it glosses over evil, and confounds it with good. None knew so well as Balaam that whoso touched the people of God, touched the apple of his eye; yet all was lost in the love of filthy lucre; he was maddened by avarice, and deaf even to the voice of an ass!

There are two persons mentioned in sacred history, with whom Balaam may be properly contrasted: one is Rahab the harlot; she was placed in a similar dilemma; on the one side she had the comparatively light fear of sudden destruction, with all the rest of the city, by the invading enemy, whose spies she harboured; on the other, she had to dread the more terrible doom of a discovered traitress. She hesitated not a moment which to choose; fearless of the lingering tortures that must await one, if discovered, who had betrayed her city, she received the spies from pure reverence for the God of Israel. Her love to God allies her, though an alien, to his people; she feels a leaning of heart towards the spies, as sacred persons, inviolable deposites; and only barters for the life of herself and her kindred; a conduct worthy of a servant of God, worthy to be enrolled with that of the faithful.

The other person, whose conduct may be contrasted with Balaam's, is Ruth the Moabitess; she, when her sister Orpah resolved to return to her people in Moab, clave to her Israelitish mother Naomi, and addressed her in those affecting words, "Entreat me not to leave thee; where thou dwellest I will dwell, and where thou diest I will die; thy people shall be mine, and thy God my God." And she, also, had her high reward; for thus embarking her interest with that of Israel, "a full reward was given her of the Lord God of Israel, under whose shadow she was come to trust;" united to Boaz, she became the recorded ancestor of David and the Messiah. Unlike the son of Beor, she felt all her best hopes and affections bound up with those of God's Israel.

The rock on which Balaam made shipwreck of his soul was the same on which Judas Iscariot was lost, the lust of lucre; he loved it more than he loved the favour of God; he feared its loss more than he feared the curse of God. And is there nothing, it may be said to many, in your heart like this? no evil desire and motive preponderating against conscience, and preventing the perfect union of your heart to God? nothing that makes a wall of partition between you and his people, between you and himself, and keeps you from "following the Lord fully," from "following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth?" nothing that you love more than the Great Eternal himself? while your situation is like that of the amiable young man to whom our Saviour said, "Yet lackest thou one thing;" one thing only, and yet that equivalent with many, yea, with all things; since it kept him from following Christ; it prevailed against eternity; it out-

weighed the value of his soul! But, whatever it may be, God is not mocked; He sees it, and withholds his blessing. God will never dwell in any heart in which He is not enthroned! God will never be a patron of idolatry; a party, a pander, to any man's lusts! He will have a living sacrifice, or none at all!

Are there none who are varnishing over some part of their conduct with specious excuses that cannot satisfy even themselves? If you are sincere, you will have no difficulty to explain; nothing crooked or obscure to justify. The way of God is a plain way; even the fool need not err therein. But remember, if you are found prevarieating, it is against your own soul; you are putting out your own light; and never can you attain ultimate happiness, but in resigning yourself up wholly to a state of union with the blessed and only Potentate, for time and eternity! "Happy is he that condemns not himself in that which he allows." You are ready to condemn Balaam; but, perhaps, you are less excusable; subjected to a less temptation, and favoured with a greater light. Pray that God would search your heart, and make you see if any wickedness lurk within it. Have you found out the leak in your character? have you detected the traitor in your camp? Destroy the foe; and, as you cannot by your own strength, apply to Jesus Christ for help! "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed!" To as many as receive Him, He gives power to become sons of God by believing in his name. When you have identified your interest with that of Jesus Christ, his power will be so perfect in your weakness, that you shall prove at last "more than conquerors through Him that loved you."

LII.

EARLY PIETY EXEMPLIFIED IN ABIJAH.*

1 Kings, xiv., 13: *All Israel shall mourn for him; . . . . because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, October 15, 1826, on the death of a pious youth, the son of the Rev. John Foster.]

The connexion of these words is briefly this: A son of Jeroboam is taken ill; his mother assumes a disguise, and bears presents, in the hope of obtaining a favourable promise from the prophet; but the prophet, inspired, sees through the artifice, and denounces that when her feet shall enter the city in return, the child shall die. It is very remarkable that this child, born and bred in so wicked a house as that of Jeroboam, discovered sincere piety. His father instituted idolatry over all the land, and

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

is never named but as he who not only sinned, but "made Israel to sin." Yet in his house there was a child who, unseduced by such an example, had in his heart "some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." There are some remarks on this passage to which I shall request your serious attention.

1. It is here implied that religion is an internal principle: "something was found in him." Religion is seated in the heart; it consists in a right frame of the inner man—in the rectifying of the judgment, the will, and the affections. "The kingdom of God," says our Saviour, "is within you." The reign of God is established in every true believer. Hence God alone can certainly know his own people. There may be every outward appearance of religion to our view; but as the heart is the seat, and God alone can see the heart, so none but God can pronounce the final judgment on the character. Accordingly, the Apostle Peter, speaking of a good man, adds, "a brother, as I suppose:" even the discerning of spirits failed here . . . . The first prayer with every one should be, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Let this be done, and the congenial conduct will follow—as the water partakes of the spring—as the fruits represent the tree.

2. Religion is the best of principles: "some good thing"—good by way of eminence above all else—that which makes all besides good—that which purifies from all evil. There can be no form of good but what is comprised in religion: it implies purity in affections as well as actions; benevolence not only in words, but exertions and sacrifices; integrity in purpose and proceeding; whatever is good in solitary or in social conduct. It is good, above all, as it qualifies for true felicity, and unites us to its author and substance in God. Without it, all is depraved and crooked—all energies are only perverted; even genius is only an instrument of destruction; the fairest gifts are only like adornments of the sepulchre in which human nature lies entombed and corrupted—wanting this, which is the salt of nature, and which alone purifies and preserves the man. Could we see things with the eyes of a spirit, not Babylon in ruins would appear so doleful a spectacle as a heart wrong towards God, where every thing about the moral creature is only, essentially, and incurably evil!

3. Religion has "the Lord God" for its author and its object: "some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." Towards Him it tends, as the flame tends upward. It is devotedness to his will, engagedness in his service, desire of his glory—a supreme concern to please Him whom man was made to please. He sits enthroned upon the pious heart, and rules all its powers and affections. Religion realizes his invisible hand and government in all things. It makes God, as it were, seen—God, as it were, felt! Hence religion casts a kind of splendour over all the actions of him who has it: it purifies from all that is unclean, elevates all that is low, and expands all that is contracted—impressing, in a degree, on its subject the character and image of

God. Abijah realized his name, denoting in the Hebrew "The Lord is my Father," in his filial regard and resemblance to his heavenly Father.

4. The smallest degree of real religion does not escape the eye of God. In the son of Jeroboam there was probably but a little of enlightened piety; his virtue was probably very crude and imperfect. Still, though but little, there was "some good thing:" the minute seed of the mustard-tree is not undervalued by Jesus Christ. He is a most compassionate, as well as a most discerning Judge; He despises not the day of small things: like Jacob's herdsmen, the good Shepherd drives his flock tenderly; bears the lambs in his arms; helps the weak. In the beautiful language of the prophet, "The bruised reed He will not break; the smoking flax He will not quench." Let none be discouraged: He sees the rising of trembling penitence; He detects the least beginning of good within. If you arise to return, the heavenly Father is ready to meet you on the way, while you are yet afar off.

5. Early piety, always pleasing to the Lord, is pre-eminently pleasing when it appears amid an irreligious family; as it appeared in the case of Jeroboam's son. This is an instance that local impediments to piety can never become insurmountable: none can be so circumstanced as to be cut off from the possibility of repentance: God has never beset the way of eternal life with impracticable obstructions. Piety, in unfavourable situations, has the charm of a myrtle or a rose in the desert, lovely in the eye of God and man. And it is possible that even the surrounding evils may be made to work for the good of those that seek God: profaneness and profligacy may serve as an awful beacon: if you listen to the inward voice, you may thus be warned by such frightful examples: if you are earnest in the great concern of man, you may be instructed even by the sight of vice and crime: they may show you the horror of irreligion, if not the beauty of godliness; they may seem, in effect, to say, "This is the way, walk in it; turn not aside to the right hand or the left."

But there are others, of an opposite character, who, with good examples given, turn their backs on what they cannot but approve; others, who at once are compelled to venerate, and determined to forsake, the guide of their youth; who rebel against that excellence which they cannot but envy. Against such, the pious son of Jeroboam will appear as an awful witness at the last day! Tyre and Sidon and Nineveh will be their judges! Better to have never known the way, to have been the offspring of the most reprobate parents, to have never seen the light that lights every man born into the world, than, seeing, to despise it! Thus, in either case, family connexions cannot essentially affect us; they are but transient; we shall soon be left alone; every individual must stand isolated from the nearest relations, and give account of himself to God! Only be in earnest; determine that you will be saved; that you will not let God go, except He bless you; and nothing in heaven or earth can prevent your salvation. Whosoever will call on the Lord, he shall be saved.

6. Yet early piety affords no security against an untimely grave. Long life was then a promised blessing to the followers of heavenly wisdom: yet even then, as the text presents an instance, it was not always dispensed to them; for it would have required a perpetual miracle to have afforded such an exemption from the uncertainty of this frail life. Now, however, there is no such promise: there is, indeed, a tendency in religion to preserve and prolong life, by its regulation of the passions and habits; but life is uncertain to the pious as well as others; the ripest for heaven are often the earliest to be gathered: God has reserved, under the gospel, far brighter rewards than any of a temporary nature, than the addition of a few more fleeting years; even the reward of eternal life through Jesus Christ, who says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life!" And who that has the dawn of that life, the day-star of that glory rising in his heart, ever regretted his approaching departure from mortality? No, he has rather a desire to depart and to be with Christ! Death more than ever corrects and clears his view of things; he sees this world in its utter vanity, and looks only for eternal things.

7. Lastly, early piety, though cut off in its opening bloom, has a record in heaven and earth; there is a fragrancy in its remembrance. "All Israel mourned him." When a child dies in his sins, the only alleviation left to his disconsolate parent is to forget his loss, to retire within himself, and aim to lose himself in the higher scene before him: but how cold is such consolation compared with that which the pious parent enjoys, whose child, as he has every reason to believe, is only glorified before himself, and waits to welcome him ere long! Who can console a parent for the eternal destruction of his own flesh and blood? How should this idea urge every parent to labour, both by example and instruction, to secure, as far as in him lies, the immortal welfare of his offspring, and train them up for God! Remember that, without religion, all the ornaments of education are only like preparing a richer sacrifice for the tomb.

And let the young now be faithful to their convictions! now make that choice which alone they can approve! now resist whatever they cannot but condemn! Let none defer the work of God to a more convenient season; no season can possibly arrive so convenient as the present: difficulties will only increase by repeated habits of neglect; they can never be so small as they are now. The chains of sin will only be riveted by wearing: until God will wait no longer for the procrastinating trifler, but say, as He said by the prophet, "Let him alone; he is joined to idols; let him alone!" This has been the ruin of millions: let it not be that of any here! It is but few that deliberately reject religion; their sin and ruin lie in procrastination: they look forward to a day of repentance that never arrives! Now is the accepted day! This is our only inheritance of time; all beyond this is God's, enveloped in the secret of his purpose! Let us all, therefore, now set ourselves with new devotedness for heaven; that, when the Lord shall come with his fan in his hand, we may not be cast out as the chaff and refuse for destruction, but be gathered with the precious wheat into his eternal garner!

LIII.

DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON.*

1 Chronicles, xxviii., 9 : *And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.*

[Preached to young persons, at Cambridge, Jan. 2, 1802.]

This was the exhortation of King David, a little before his death, addressed to his son Solomon ; and the advice upon which he most emphatically insists is, to adhere closely to God, and to make it his first and chief care to serve and please Him. As there never was but one acceptable way of serving and pleasing God, this exhortation is as applicable to every individual as it was to Solomon, and is recorded for our instruction, "upon whom the ends of the world are come." Each of us, therefore, should consider himself as deeply interested in the words, "*Know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.*"

David means to include in the knowledge of God, the dispositions which should influence us in our approaches to Him : "*He that cometh unto God must believe that He is.*" It is a belief in the perfections of God, including all his natural and moral perfections—his goodness, his mercy, his truth, his justice, his immutability, and his faithfulness ; in short, an acquaintance with Him as the moral governor of the world. For it is to no purpose to be acquainted with the abstract perfections of God, unless we seek Him as the Ruler and Controller of all his creatures, and feel such a subjection of the will to Him as implies our weakness ; a deep conviction that God rules, and that every other being is but an instrument in his hands. David intimates that he would have Solomon know God as "*the God of his father ;*" that is, know Him in those ordinances of his worship that had been made so delightful to himself, and have supported the pious in all ages. For there never was but one religion ; it was taught to our first parents after the fall, and was the religion of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of David. In the New Testament, we are farther instructed that in Jesus Christ is to be found that knowledge which will influence the heart, and lead us to imitate Him, and to make Him our portion. The veil which hangs over us in nature and in providence is removed by Jesus Christ ; that vague and scientific sense of God which philosophy taught is taken away ; and he has given us that true knowledge of God which replenishes the heart, and draws us to seek after Him as the ultimate good. "*I have manifested thy name to the men which thou gavest me out of the world ; thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word.*" The apostle says, "*We know that*

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness; and we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ." To true Christians God does not impart truth merely to the understanding, but to the heart; in consequence of which, that otherwise mysterious promise of our Lord is made known to them: "*If a man will love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*" In this important sense we are to know God, the God of our father; and the design of it is, that we may serve Him with a "*perfect heart and a willing mind.*" One of the great peculiarities of the truth of Christianity is, that it is altogether practical; and no knowledge of God can be of any use to us but what is so. He has revealed his majesty to us, in order to be loved and obeyed. All high and sublime speculations that do not partake of the doctrines of Christianity do not sanctify; they may enlarge the understanding, but do not influence the heart. The service of God stands opposed to three things:

First. To a *profane contempt of God.*

David was exceedingly intent upon being a restorer of the worship of God, and the builder of a temple for Him, as appears in the following words: "*Hear me, my brethren, and my people: as for me, I had in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the* LORD, *and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: but God said unto me, Thou shalt not build a house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. And he said unto me, Solomon, thy son, he shall build my house and my courts; for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his Father.*" There are those who set their tongues against the heavens, who speak bold and impious things, who say that it is a vain thing to serve God, and what profit is there in his ordinances? In opposition to such a spirit, we are commanded to fear his name, to reverence his worship, to keep the holy solemnity of the Sabbath, which he has appointed, and thus to distinguish ourselves from the world.

Secondly. The service of God is opposed to *a temporal morality.*

It is true that religion prescribes all the parts of morality; but here is the difference, it prescribes the same duties, but upon higher principles. It enlists all morality into its service, and places it upon a superior foundation. Are we, for instance, commanded to be chaste, temperate, and sober: the intention is not merely to preserve us from the diseases which those vices might bring with them, but that we may become temples of the Holy Ghost. It teaches us to do good; not that we may be applauded for our benevolence, but that we may "*be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect.*" It teaches us to bear injuries with calmness, and to forgive our enemies and persecutors; because "*great is our reward in heaven.*" In short, there is no part of virtue, as it respects ourselves or the world, but Christianity presses it into its service. It embraces and imbodies all that imagination has conceived, and all that religion has sanctioned.

It must be evident to every reflecting mind, that this conscientious practice of all virtue—this attention to the purity of our motives—this steady and devoted service of God, which Christianity requires, is very distinct from that which the men of the world think necessary and inexpressibly superior.

Thirdly. The knowledge and service of God is opposed to *that kind of religion which entirely leaves out the affections.*

There are those who think it necessary to attend religious worship only to pacify conscience or to comply with the necessary customs of society. This, it is to be feared, is the religion of great multitudes, and of those who, though shocked at open impiety and profaneness, have never entered into the real sanctuary of religion, or felt devotedness of heart to God. They have never tasted of the richness of his promises, have never experienced that delight in Him which engages all the powers and faculties of the mind in his service—which makes duty our delight, and cuts off temptations to sin and concupiscence. God demands the heart: "*My son, give me thine heart;*" and justice requires that the greatest being should have the largest share in our affections, and thus become the voluntary object of our minds.

By what MOTIVES shall we impress this knowledge of God upon your minds? By what motives urge you to "*know God, the God of your father, and to serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind?*" The knowledge of God will correct the vanity of every other kind of knowledge—the knowledge of God will correct the vanity of our passions—the knowledge of God will correct the vanity that attaches to every state and condition in life.

First. *The knowledge of God will correct the vanity of every other kind of knowledge.*

When Solomon had taken a survey of the stores of nature, this was, in his view, the conclusion of the whole matter: "*Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.*" This is the consideration which will render our inquiries sober; and it is for want of this that knowledge only "puffeth up." Those persons are in the greatest danger of becoming atheists (next to such as live in the indulgence of their passions) who are in the habit of looking at second causes: they acquire that sort of knowledge which becomes as a veil to hide God from view. Knowledge, it must be considered, is not to be sought simply for its own sake; for, till we possess piety, or a sense of God, we find no ultimate end in its acquisition, and no satisfaction to our inquiries. It is the knowledge of God alone that furnishes any rest or peace to the mind: destitute of this knowledge, we see ourselves but as atoms, surrounded with infinite objects that we know not. On the one side we see the weakness and misery of our nature, so as to "*say to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister;*" and, on the other, we see our dignity as beings connected with immortality. The knowledge of God teaches us that our grandeur is the relict of that image of God which was lost by sinning against Him; and thus it gives repose to our inquiries, by fixing them upon Him who is the centre and rest of

all minds. If you wish to know what you are, whence you sprang, to what class of beings you belong, or what is your destiny—how the misery of the one part of your nature is compatible with the grandeur of the other—you must enter into the school of Christ, who imparts that wisdom which is to make us "*wise unto salvation.*" There is in human nature, my brethren, great traces of grandeur, a vigour of thought, a power of transmitting our ideas into futurity; at the same time, man is subject to so many disappointments and miseries, and to such uncertainty in all his pursuits, that he may well be impressed with the notion of his alliance to the beasts, as if his all were to eat and to drink, for on the morrow he dies. The first of these sentiments taught him to be proud, the other sunk him into brutishness. Revelation only shows him the reality of his condition, that Christianity is intended to restore him to that grandeur which he has lost by sin, and that reconciliation with God is the only remedy for his woes. Thus the greatness of man does not elevate or inflame him.

Secondly. *The knowledge of God will correct the vanity of our passions.*

It is confessed that innumerable evils occur by pursuing the object of our passions; but this conviction does not correct our mistakes, unless we have a principle of piety. As no two examples are perfectly alike, we imagine that we shall be able to secure to ourselves a portion of good; and are thus induced to commit ourselves upon the ocean of life, depending on our own strength and wisdom. Every man without piety is a prey to some passion or other. At one time he wishes to acquire great renown in the world; at another time, he would pursue the pleasures of sense or of reason, or of gayety and dissipation; and thus the soul is perpetually torn by contrarieties. Religion composes the mind to tranquillity; for when the love of God becomes the predominant passion, no worldly advantage is regarded, but what seems compatible with the fear and love of God as our perpetual portion. With this feeling, the Christian dwells in a continual calm. No man can be found who is not conscious of a void which none could fill: hence some have been disposed, by a system of philosophy, to destroy the passions. Reason, it is true, will baffle these passions when it does not conquer; it will show the nakedness and deformity of the epicure, and make him more miserable, by knowing that he is miserable: but religion alone, by concentrating our trust in God, as the chief good and the great Supreme, can supply a remedy to all these diseases. Nothing can be truer than that declaration, "*There is no peace to the wicked.*" Whatever evils or trials may befall us, when properly improved, they will lead us to God. Sanctified afflictions are the means of bringing men to Him, and leading them to receive the full impression of this truth, that there is no peace but in Him.

Thirdly. *The knowledge of God will correct the vanity that attaches to every state and condition in life.*

Every one must perceive that an almost universal discontent with their condition pervades mankind. Every one is anxious to change his own state for another, in which he imagines that he shall be more

happy. Religion reverses this disorder of mind, which springs from the corruption of our nature; it shows us our unworthiness on account of sin; and while it produces content with *the place* we are in, it makes us dissatisfied with ourselves, so that the state and external condition in which we are found will have very little influence upon the mind. The man of the world is reconciled to his sins, and not to his state. The man of piety is in hostility to his sins, and reconciled to his state. The men of the world are always changing their state, and imagining a happiness which continually flies from them. It is the same in every period of life. In youth, the objects of the world not being tried, they think themselves at liberty to take excursions after happiness, and place it in the gratification of their passions. Weary of these, they become men, and effect a grave and dignified course; they then pursue riches, and aspire after grandeur and consequence, but soon find that these have their cares and anxieties. When they become old, they look with equal contempt upon both periods; for both appear to them like a confused dream, that leaves nothing but a succession of images, which have lost their charms. But piety will produce satisfaction with our condition, and prevent the indulgence of the passions. In fact, in every way and at all periods, it will preserve them; in youth, in manhood, and in advanced age. It will teach men that they have one solid good to obtain, and that time is short for attaining it. Dejection and gloom can have no place in that man who, having spent his life in serving God, looks forward to glory, honour, and immortality; for he "*runs without being weary, and walks without being faint.*" He has exchanged the vigour of youth for the full growth of the Christian, and is ready to say, with the apostle, "*I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course: I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day.*"

On the whole, we learn that the knowledge of God, and that substantial piety which flows from it, will ensure an eternal happiness. Remember, my brethren, that death roams abroad, and reason and faith ought to set the distance aside. You are going into the presence of God; and all that now amuses you will then appear as a dream. Resolve to spend this year for God and religion. Through want of watchfulness, resolutions are ineffectual; yet no man can be wise unless he resolves to be so. Go to that God who has promised to give wisdom, and beg that he will teach you the knowledge of himself, who is the source of happiness to all beings, and supports the saints under affliction, and in the hour of death. Entreat that he would give you of the fruit of that tree of knowledge, of which whoever tastes will live, and appear spotless before the throne. In comparison with this, all the riches of the world are folly, all its grandeur is meanness, and the universe but dust. "*Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.*"

LIV.

THE SOLEMN ENGAGEMENT.*

2 Chronicles, xv., 15: *And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all the heart, and sought Him with their whole desire; and He was found of them; and the Lord gave them rest round about.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, Feb. 8, 1827, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

It is a sufficient apology for adducing Old Testament subjects for the encouragement and direction of Christians, that, though the Old Testament dispensation has passed away, so that the precepts and observances are not to be enforced, except as they are corroborated by the New, yet we are informed that the Jewish nation and economy, generally, was a type of the Church of God. The dispensations of God's providence towards it represent corresponding dispensations of providence now. The things that happened to them, says Paul, "happened to them as ensamples"—types, patterns.

The Old Testament is replete with typical persons, typical ceremonies, places, things, events, institutions, especially its sacrifices. It was throughout, the apostle informs us, "a shadow of good things to come." We are to compare one with another. We discern in the gospel that finished work of which the Law was the commencement. In both dispensations we trace that identity of feeling which pervades all good men. The expressions of David of old are the expressions of our devotion now: "As face answereth to face in a glass, so doth the heart of man to man."

We must confess that care is necessary not to press the comparison of the two dispensations too far, so as to lose sight of the difference between the two. We must not apply immediately to the state of Christians every promise in the Old Testament. Some of the promises were confined to the Mosaical economy: some of the prophecies, also, received their accomplishment in the age when they were delivered, or in those immediately following, and, therefore, are not to be fulfilled now. Similar cautions may be extended to other points in the comparison between the Old and the New Testament.

But, to leave this digression, or, rather, *introduction* to our subject, we have before us an account of the reformation in religion made by King Asa. Abijah, his father, had encouraged idolatry; he had followed the last days of Solomon; but Asa's heart had been touched with the fear of God at an early period; and, throughout his reign, it was perfect before God, allowing for some serious drawbacks. Piety is no protection against external calamities. An invasion of an Ethiopian prince took place; probably the troops were composed of some tribes of the Cushites of Arabia, or the neighbouring parts. Ethiopi-

* From the notes of the Rev. Dr. Wilson, now Bishop of Calcutta.

ans in Scripture generally mean the Arabs, and not the inhabitants of the country south of Egpyt. This prince came upon Judah with a million of forces. Asa applied in prayer to God, and pleaded that it was nothing with Him to help, whether with many or with them that have no power; and that in his name he went against the multitude of his enemies. "Let not man, O Lord," concludes the pious monarch, "let not man prevail against Thee."

Thus he rested; cast himself upon God, who justified his confidence and heard his prayer. Asa not only drove back his enemies, but enlarged his own territory; he recovered Gera, which had been taken by the Philistines. Azariah, the son of Oded, a prophet, of whom we read nothing but on this occasion, met Asa immediately upon his victory; and after appealing to the dealings of God with Israel in past times, and solemnly warning him of the consequences of disobedience, invited Asa to return to the Lord, and institute a national reformation. From this time Asa took courage; assembled the people, and attempted a serious and important reformation; removed the abominable idols; renewed the decayed altar of the Lord; re-established his worship at the temple; deposed Maacah the queen, and cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burned it at the brook Kedron, as an expression of abhorrence. Then he engaged his people in a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers: "And they sware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets." This was a repetition of the covenant made at Mount Sinai.

The text then assures us of the manner and spirit in which the engagement was made. They "rejoiced at the oath," and especially because of the unanimity which accompanied it. This was attended with instruments of music, and shouting, agreeably to the splendour of that dispensation, when instrumental music was peculiarly appropriate. We read of similar reformations under Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and, lastly, under Josiah; in each of which the proceedings were national. The king took the lead, for the kingdom and the Church were the same; the king was the head of the Church, though he was not permitted to interfere with the priesthood; he was the vicegerent and lieutenant of the Almighty; for God himself was their supreme Lord and King, and the kings had a delegated power under Him. This was designed to unite the nation under one and the same species of government, for the preservation of the purity of worship, and to perpetuate the statutes and ordinances given by the hand of Moses.

Let us, then, consider, I. The nature of the engagement, and its connexion with our duty now; and, II. The spirit with which that engagement was entered into, and especially the joy and satisfaction which accompanied it.

I. It was an engagement to return to that covenant which God had made with their fathers, by which He avouched them to be his people, and entered into alliance with them as their God. This embraced the exclusive worship of Jehovah, and an acknowledgment of the duty of cultivating all those affections, and performing all those

actions, which are due to Him. It was an engagement to serve God supremely and entirely; to love Him with all their heart; to place their dependance upon Him; and to regulate their conduct by his will. Real engagements with God are, under all dispensations, substantially the same. For Jehovah is the same, He changes not, and man is the same; and the nature of that religion of which God is the object cannot change, though it may be distinguished by different circumstances, and by various degrees of light. This engagement is called an oath; and it is said, "they sware unto the Lord;" though whether they took the oath in the formal terms, and with the solemnities observed in judicial matters, may be doubted. But, as they publicly appealed to God for the sincerity of what they professed, the engagement had all the force and sanction of an oath. Let us observe,

1. When the Christian convert first engages in the service of God through Christ, who is the object of his obedience, love, confidence, and trust, this engagement may be termed an oath. Every one who enters into covenant with God, enters into an engagement equivalent, in force and solemnity, to an oath: it implies a solemn appeal to the omnipresent and ommiscient God. A formal oath cannot bring with it any thing more awful than the making God the inspector and judge of the sincerity of our declaration; except, perhaps, as to our fellow-creatures not being witnesses so distinctly of the transaction, as in the case of oaths in civil and criminal proceedings. But as to the substance of the appeal, every conversion to God implies an engagement equivalent, in seriousness, to that of the people under Asa. The vows of God are upon the convert. He appeals to the Supreme Creator, the Searcher of hearts; which amounts, in fact, to an oath. He acknowledges himself to belong to Christ. He avouches the Lord to be his God. He feels and confesses that he is not his own, but bought with a price, that he may glorify God with his body and with his spirit, which are God's.

2. On the public profession of our faith before the Church at our baptism, we enter into covenant with God, we repeat and renew the engagement more privately made between God and our souls. This is a most solemn transaction, a declaration and engagement as solemn as words and actions can convey. By being baptized into the name of each particular person in the Godhead, we recognise each particular person as our Lord and our God, according to the parts which they bear in the mystery of our salvation: we recognise and subject ourselves to God the Father, as our Father, who hath loved us, and given his Son for us; to God the Son, as our Saviour, who became incarnate and died for our redemption; to God the Holy Spirit, as that Divine Agent by whom we are enabled to believe in Christ, and are united to Him and the Father in love: we enter into an engagement which has the nature of an oath, to be the Father's, the Son's, and the Holy Spirit's. We have the marks and signs of the covenant upon us. Holiness is the grand qualification for serving God. He has appointed an element to be used in baptism which is ordinarily used in purifying the body from defilement, in order to represent the pu-

rifying of the soul by the Holy Spirit: we receive, therefore, in baptism, the symbols, and pledges, and marks of sanctifying grace: we bear upon our body the impress of the Lord Jesus.

3. At the table of the Lord these vows are again renewed by the Christian believer. A solemn engagement is then again undertaken. When we receive the sacred elements of the bread Divine, it is a great and most serious promise to take Christ as our Saviour, to receive Him as the only ground of our dependance, our Lord, our Pattern, our Prince, our Shepherd, our Friend. We engage ourselves to live upon Him, as the Bread of life; and to live to Him, as the Lord of conscience, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. There is no form of words of the precise nature of swearing, indeed; but this engagement has in it the nature and sanction of an oath. We declare solemnly, in the presence of the all-seeing God, that we are the Lord's, and that we will renounce every thing that is displeasing in his sight. The very word *sacrament*, by which the Lord's Supper is most commonly designated, is derived from the military oath of the Roman soldiers—*sacramentum militaire*—by which they swore never to desert their standard, nor flee before their enemies, but to continue faithful unto death. In like manner this engagement binds the soul to Christ, and renders it a sacrilege afterward to alienate it to the service of sin and the world. And, on the other hand, the Lord binds himself, where this engagement is sincerely taken, to bestow on us all the grace and blessings promised in the Divine covenant.

How important a thing, then, is it to make a profession of religion! It is not the calling ourselves by a new name, nor forsaking one community of Christians and joining ourselves to another; it is not the transferring our attendance and influence from one place, and one minister, to new ones; but it is an engagement which extends to the whole of our being; it is the consecration of ourselves to the unseen but omnipotent Ruler; it is an act which associates us with angels; it is a bond obliging us to live and elevate ourselves to God; to turn our attention from all creatures to Him; to account every thing as vanity but God and his service. And these vows are repeated whenever we approach the Lord's Table. We hold out again, on each such occasion, to the world around us, our public profession of faith in Christ: we proclaim to angels, to men, to devils, to the Church, to God, and to Christ, that we are not our own, but the Lord's; that we have made ourselves over to Christ, to be guided by Him for time and eternity.

This engagement, I would now observe, after thus enumerating the chief occasions when it is made, must reach the heart. It does not extend to actions merely, and stop there; it does not extend to times and seasons only, and stop there; but it pervades all time, all places, the whole man. We are consecrated to God, with all our bodily faculties and mental powers. We are not our own: we resign ourselves to God, as his peculiar property; to be kept as a sacred thing, to be "the habitation of God through the Spirit."

This engagement, once more, must be voluntary. So it was in the

case of Israel and King Asa before us. For although God has a claim to all our obedience, and a right over us, which nothing can impair or increase, yet He treats us as He did Israel—as free and accountable agents. He laid before the nations of Israel, when the covenant was made at Mount Sinai, the law: He proposed it to their choice, He asked their assent. Upon this, the people accepted the conditions of the covenant. In a covenant, the several parties must act a voluntary part. Religion will not bear compulsion. If obedience is compelled, it is no obedience. Though God enjoins obedience by the sanctions of his law, and has an infinite right to it, as our Creator and Benefactor, yet if we yield that obedience reluctantly, it is not true obedience; it is connected with fear, which has torment; it has nothing vital, nothing of love, nothing cordial, nothing acceptable to God. And such compulsory obedience is, moreover, only partial and temporary; it extends only to a few branches of duty; and is like the morning cloud and the early dew, which soon pass away.

But this engagement must be sincere and hearty, cordial and affectionate. The Christian yields himself unto God as one that is alive from the dead. He says, "Other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us, but by Thee only will we make mention of thy name." He renounces all other masters, and cheerfully devotes himself to one Master, even Christ. He is a volunteer in his service, made willing in the day of Christ's power, and presented to Him in the beauty of holiness.

II. Let us now consider the spirit with which the engagement was entered into, and especially the joy and satisfaction which accompanied it.

No joy is equal to that which accompanies this transaction of engaging ourselves to God. We have never any true joy, joy of a pure and elevated nature, till we know what it is to enter into covenant with God, by the sacrifice of Christ. Men may have pleasure before, but not joy. They may have the satisfactions of the world, transient and unholy; but the mind is not blessed; the heart is not filled with intellectual, moral, substantial joy. Now the reasons of joy in the case of King Asa are similar to those which prevail in every such case.

1. There is a joy in engaging solemnly with God, because the thing is infinitely right. "A good man," says Solomon, "is satisfied from himself," from a consciousness of the propriety and rectitude of his actions. When we act agreeably to right reason, there is a complacency which follows, and of which we are conscious. On the contrary, when we act in opposition to what is right, we are rebuked by our own minds; there is a struggle, a conflict within us. Now, it is infinitely right to engage ourselves to the Lord. It is proportionate to his character, and our state and wants. We can only be made happy by Him; we have nothing but what we receive from Him; we owe Him, therefore, ourselves. The character of God, his unspeakable mercies, the sufferings of Christ, the grace of the Spirit, the offers of the gospel, make it unspeakably reasonable to engage ourselves

to his service. We then treat God as He is; we act agreeably to his nature and our relations to Him. Till we do this, we act most irrationally; we walk in a lie.

Man is a creature wandering in darkness, in the midst of precipices and falls. Like the man in the gospel who dwelt among the tombs, none can bind him, no, not with chains: many have tried to do so, but the bonds and fetters were broken, and they came away wounded. What joy, then, does it create, what transport, when the light of day beams upon him; when his fetters and bands are broken off, and he sits at the Saviour's feet, clothed, and in his right mind! "The path of the just is as the shining light:" the way of truth and holiness approves itself to the mind. The approbation of the inmost soul of man confers upon it its sanction.

2. There is joy also in engaging with God, because it is a plain token of good on the part of God. So it was in the case of Asa and his people. They saw that God was with them, and had wrought for them; and others also, perceiving this, joined themselves to them, from Ephraim and Manasseh, and turned to the Lord God of their fathers with their whole heart. Whereas, when God had previously left them to themselves, they wandered farther and farther from Him, and fell into abominable idolatries. Their engaging themselves with the solemnity of an oath to return to God, was a proof that God was with them, and was blessing them; and this was a just cause of joy. Good men then felt, as they do now, the need of Divine teaching and influence. It is said expressly that the Lord prepared the heart of the people under Hezekiah's reformation; and that in Judah the hand of the Lord was with them, to give them one heart. If we engage to be the Lord's, the hand of the Lord has been upon us; our hearts have been divinely touched; it is the token of the favour and love of God upon us. And this is a copious source of joy. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," said our Lord to Peter, on confessing that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God; "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Such a confession was a subject of congratulation. Thus every one is blessed who confesses Christ, and binds himself to his service; the hand of God is with him, the Spirit of God has marked him for his own.

3. There is, farther, joy in making this engagement, because it is a token of good from God for the future, as well as with a respect to the past. Those who engage themselves to Him have a pledge of all future blessings. He is pleased to pledge himself to them, as their protector, and rest, and peace, and portion. Asa and his people, in the case before us, had a pledge of the serene possession of their own land. This was peculiar to the national covenant of God with Israel. "The Lord gave them rest round about," says the text. They sat again under their vine and fig-tree, none making them afraid; they had the secure continuance of good laws and government, and the assurance of being free from plagues and judgments. These, and other temporal blessings, were included in the covenant of Canaan; and the restoration of these blessings resulted from their obedience in thus

engaging themselves to the Lord. And these may be considered as types of the spiritual blessings enjoyed, both by them and by us, in every age, and under the Christian dispensation, who devote ourselves to God in his covenant. This peace, and serenity, and fruitfulness, and freedom from desolating judgments, are representations of the infinite privileges and immunities of the spiritual Church of God. They are the tokens and pledges that there is no condemnation to him that believeth—that the Christian is adopted into the family of heaven—that all in the Divine Being is pledged for his security—that Christ is his elder brother, and that the Spirit, who sanctifies the Church, is his internal monitor, the inhabitant of his soul.

And can you doubt whether God will indeed thus bless those who are engaging themselves in covenant with Him? The man who has a heart to serve God, has a witness in himself that he is adopted into the heavenly family, and that all blessings are in reserve for him. Only love God, and serve Him, and remain faithful to your oath and covenant, and this is a better security for eternal happiness than a voice from heaven. A vision of angels would not be so good a security for our future peace, as the consciousness that "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

4. The joy of this oath was increased by the unanimity of those who took it—the numbers, the courage, the harmonious efforts and resolutions. It is said that Asa took courage, and that he "gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them;" and "all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire."

What pleasure does the Christian feel when hand joins in hand in the love of God—when men on every hand, and with one consent, say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths!" What a pleasure, when Christians go up to the house of God in company—when many flock, and "ask their way to Zion with their faces thitherward"—when the Church is exhibiting the unity and harmony of a body breathing the same spirit, speaking the same language, animated by the same charity! What joy will there be one day in the Church of God, when all the followers of Christ shall be filled with love—tolerating what is indifferent and non-essential—touched, transformed, and sanctified by the living truth of Jesus!

Let me now, in concluding this subject, observe, that we have all entered into a solemn covenant with God, which has the nature of an oath, if we are Christians. You are to renew this on the next Sunday. You then renounce the world once more; you turn your back again upon all its pleasures, and direct your attention to eternal realities. You approach to behold your Redeemer upon his throne of grace, to drink into the Spirit of his transforming dispensation—you express all your desires, and renew all your vows at his table. "What manner of persons, then, ought you to be, in all holy conver-

sation and godliness," who take such vows upon you? Shall we carry sin unrepented of into the presence of the heart-searching Being? Can we combine the living and the dead? "What fellowship hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? and what fellowship hath the temple of God with idols?" If we consecrate ourselves to Christ at his table, we must come out from the world: we must set ourselves apart for the Lord, as we hope He hath set us apart for himself, not by unnecessary singularity, by instances of weakness and folly, but by purity, by simplicity, by watchfulness in all important things, by universal holiness.

Thus the ends of our profession will be advanced by our glorifying God, our heavenly Father, to whom we have devoted ourselves; and by leaving a witness, an appeal upon the consciences of men among whom we live; and, in the day of visitation, something they have seen in us may be the means of awakening their minds to true religion.

Our duty and dispensation are clear. We are to be witnesses for the Lord; we are to be holy, as those that are his vessels; we are to demean ourselves as the followers of Christ, who expect to be forever with Him, and forever like Him.

LV.

FEATURES OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.*

Acts, iv., 23: *They went to their own company.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, October 5th, 1826, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

In the connexion of these words we are informed that the apostles, Peter and John, having healed the cripple who sat at the gate of the temple, were seized by the Sadducees, and imprisoned; but, as the miracle was clearly established, and the people glorified God on account of it, they were soon released, and "went to their own company." By so simple a term is the infant Church of Christ designated; "a company." As soon as Jesus had ascended, we find that there was an assembly of his followers, both men and women, who continued with one accord in prayer, resorting to an upper room. (Acts, i., 13, 14.) This small assembly was speedily increased by fresh adherents. On the day of Pentecost, three thousand converts were at once added by the preaching of Peter; and not long afterward, on the occasion connected with the text, Peter delivered an address which appears to have been even more effectual than the preceding, as it was followed by an accession of five thousand disciples. It is not related that our Saviour formally appointed and organized his Church: He left it to the natural course of things; to the operation of the human mind, assisted by Divine influence. Men find it necessary to as-

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

sociate together for all important interests, and would be sure to do so for religious purposes.

We may notice, on this occasion, the nature of the Church; the design with which it is formed; and the manner in which it is governed.

I. The nature of the Church.

1. It is a voluntary company; one to which men are not born, but to which they attach themselves by choice, to which their adherence is the effect of conviction. It was such from the first: "some believed the things which they heard, and some believed not;" some came out from their worldly connexions, and joined this holy company; some turned their backs on it, and adhered to the world. Such assemblies were at first formed in various places, and were each called a church. The term was not then used, as it has since been, to mark the whole body of Christians in any province or district, but always in one or the other of these two ways: either for the whole Church of Christ, for all his followers collectively, or for some particular society in one place. In the former sense, we read that "Christ is Head over all things to the Church, which is his body;" and again, that "He loved the Church, and gave himself for it:" in the latter sense, we hear of the churches, not the Church, of Achaia and Macedonia; while we hear of the Church which is at Corinth, or at Ephesus, or even in the dwelling of a single family.

2. It is a separated company; a holy society (holiness in Scripture denoting separation); its members are called to come out from among the people of the world; they are such as are in a state of vital subjection to the Divine authority, in distinction from those who follow the course of unrenewed nature. Hence there is an immense difference and distance, in all ages, between the irreligious world and the real Church. This leads us to remark,

3. It is a spiritual society, as opposed to a merely civil association; it consists of persons not entitled to certain peculiar worldly immunities or privileges, but born of God: "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Nothing secular properly belongs to the Church: her beauty is of a purely spiritual kind; "the king's daughter is glorious within;" "the kingdom of God is within you." Just as we cannot, by artificial embellishments, add any thing to the real beauty of nature; so all that man has aimed to add, in the way of pomp and circumstance, to the Church of Christ, instead of adorning, rather disfigures it.

4. Though human instruments are employed in this society, yet it is wholly of Divine institution. No account is given of its formal institution by Christ. He assumed its existence, and said, on the opening of his ministry, "Tell it to the Church." In fact, the Christian Church is only a more highly privileged continuation of the Jewish. All the varied offices and administrations of the Church are of Divine original: "He gave some apostles, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

5. It is an immortal company. The individual members die; the Church itself can never cease. Fresh generations of saints are continually rising up in succession: in this respect, as in that of nature, God "renews the face of the earth:" He is ever raising to life those that were born dead in sins. The sacred lamp may be removed from one place, but it is only that it may burn brighter in another. Christ has founded his Church on a rock.

II. The design with which the Church is formed. This is twofold: it is formed with a view to its own good, and to that of the world.

1. It is formed for the benefit of every individual belonging to it. The good Shepherd, while He feeds the whole of his flock, has a particular respect to the state and wants of every member; restores the wandering; bears the lambs in his arms, and gently leads those that are with young. The communion of saints affords a peculiar comfort to those among them who are troubled; they find an asylum in the sanctuary: every Christian should lend himself to others, bear their burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ; the law of love, so brightly illustrated by Christ himself, and, after Him, by that apostle who, in a noble burst of sympathy, exclaims, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" As in the first age all had all things in common, so real Christians will now be ready to share their joys and sorrows, to help the needy in temporal wants; and, most of all, to cherish a spiritual union and sympathy. When they meet to hear, and pray, and communicate together, it is that they may grow together in love to God and each other. Christian intercourse unites the hearts of the saints. It was thus even before the gospel, when "they that feared the Lord spake often together." In so great an abundance of Christian ordinances and fellowship as we enjoy, we experience this benefit by little and little; an impression is added from time to time; and we are scarcely sensible of the advantages which we are always enjoying; but the loss of these privileges would teach us their value. Those who travel as missionaries in heathen lands are often ready to exclaim, "Wo is me, I dwell with Mesech! O how amiable are the tabernacles of the Lord!"

2. The salvation of others is another part of the design with which the Church is formed. The Church is a standing fortress for God in the world. Men see this company bound for the heavenly land, and are instructed and attracted by its example; as Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, meeting him with the Israelitish Church, exclaimed, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you!" It is a testimony to the appointment of God, and His Spirit as its author. But, above all, the profession of Christians blazons abroad the great doctrine of Christ crucified, and salvation by Him alone. It is a company that walk in one light, and seek one city, before the eyes of men.

III. The manner of its government. As every society, to be well ordered, requires rules, so there are rules of church government. These, indeed, are very few and very simple: real Christians need very little law; the law is for the lawless and disobedient; but theirs is the

law of love: love is the fulfilment of the law. They are not without law to God; they are under the law to Christ; the love of Christ and Christians is the best law; this is the best casuist; without this, all besides is suspicious and ineffectual; but this will lead at once to the noblest conduct in every relation. Where, however, any professing members of the Church dishonour their profession, censure, and even excommunication, are appointed: "such are delivered to Satan" by apostolic authority and example.

The brief description of Christians is well given in these words: "They give themselves first to the Lord, and then to each other." They first feel the love of the Redeemer exciting love to himself; and then they go forth after his pattern to do good for his sake to their brethren.

What a company will this appear, when completed in heaven, purified from every stain of sin, and basking in the beatific presence of God and the Lamb! What a privilege and honour to be enrolled in the true Church! Oh, that we may all be found either inquiring the way to Zion with our faces thither, or reposing in this heavenly city!

LVI.

CONDITION OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.*

Acts, ix., 31: *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, May 11th, 1826, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

It is interesting to trace great institutions to their origin; but, above all, to trace the rise of Christianity, the greatest interposition of Providence in the affairs of men. This we are enabled to do by the records afforded us in the book of Acts, which is an infallible history of the Christian Church in its first and purest state. In the text we have,

I. The external condition of the churches of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, the three principal portions of the Holy Land, represented as a state of rest. This repose of the churches has been ascribed by some to the conversion of Paul, who had before been the chief agent in the persecution that raged; by others to the circumstance of the Jews, who were always the foremost persecutors, being engaged in opposing the erection of an image of some pagan deity in their temple; an event which occurred, according to the account of Jewish historians, in the reign of Caligula, at the time referred to in the text. The great Head of the Church knows which are the proper seasons of trouble, or of rest, for his people. When the Church enjoys continued rest, there is danger of its rusting in indolence or contracting

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

a worldly spirit. Yet seasons of quiet are favourable, in their turn, to the growth of Christianity, to the spread of missions, to the stability of fearful professors like Nicodemus. In the case of the text, God preserved at once the internal and external prosperity of the rising Church of Christ.

II. We have here also a record of the spiritual state of the Church at that time: this is described in a twofold view.

1. These churches "walked in the fear of the Lord." Christian conduct is often called in Scripture a walk: the expression implies habitual and progressive attention to the will of God; not merely a state of recumbence on the merit of Christ, but an actual obedience to his laws; a reception of Jesus Christ as the King as well as the Saviour of his people. For Jesus Christ is probably to be understood by the name "the Lord" in this, as in many other passages of the New Testament. They walked in the fear of Jesus Christ as their Lord and their Judge: influenced by this reverential respect to his authority, they professed Him openly, they loved each other, they bore each other's burdens, and so fulfilled the law of Christ. Never let us forget that we are under the law to Christ; that by Him we are redeemed from our vain conversation and from all iniquity. The evangelist seems to have transferred to the Lord Jesus Christ this expression, so frequent in the Old Testament, "the fear of the Lord," as an epitome of all religion.

2. These churches, these Christians, walked also "in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." This is a distinguishing feature of Christianity; of that "kingdom of God" which is described as "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." They tasted his first-fruits; they felt his silent influences, his gentle insinuations; they experienced his testimony to Christ; they entertained Him as the promised Comforter dwelling in themselves as his happy temples; the Spirit of adoption, who makes us feel our filial relation to our heavenly Father; the Spirit of promise, who applies all the promises of God to the heart. The fulness of the Spirit is the antepast of heaven: and this was the element in which they "walked," the air in which they breathed! What, in comparison with this, are all the pleasures of the world? Who that has ever tasted of this living water, would ever thirst again after the troubled streams of earthly joys? Here mark the connexion implied between the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Spirit: these Christians yielded themselves up to Christ, and therefore the Spirit of Christ abode with them: that Spirit will never prostitute his comforts to those who neglect holiness: make duty your concern, if you would enjoy the comforts of God! As some are fond of referring every mention of the Holy Spirit to his miraculous agency on the first disciples, it may just be observed that no reference to miracles can be supposed here, as miracles have no tendency to give joy to the heart.

III. We have the joint effect of these two principles; of this fear and of this comfort. These churches were edified, and they were multiplied.

1. They were edified. The allusion is to the rising of an edifice. "Ye are God's building." The Church is represented as a habitation of God, filled by his Spirit, and founded on the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. When Christians grow in faith, love, and holy obedience, the Church may be said to rise: when the members are united in spirit, cemented as the lively stones of the spiritual temple. It was so in those churches: there existed no jealousy between the Jew, the Galilean, and the Samaritan, before so disunited and opposed; all were one in Christ: no provocation, except to love and good works; they loved one another with a pure heart fervently. Such a happy state more than compensated for all the storms of persecution: it was a rest, the foretaste of heaven. And it was reserved for those who walked in the united fear of God and comfort of the Spirit: the fear of God was rewarded by the comfort of the Spirit; and the experience of this heavenly comfort endeared, in return, that holy fear.

2. They were multiplied. It is implied that there exists a union between the edifying and the multiplying of a Christian society. As Christians grow in grace, their example becomes the more influential on their brethren: as they let their light shine, others, seeing their good works, are attracted to glorify their heavenly Father, and add themselves to their company. When God pours out his Spirit upon his people, they spring up as willows by the waters; one says, I am the Lord's, another subscribes to the Lord, and a third surnames himself by the name of the God of Israel. What can be wanting to that church which is edified internally, and multiplied externally? What so delightful to any Christian society, as to hear the call effectually given, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!" to see its younger members coming forward and devoting themselves to the faithful profession of Christ; our children lisping the praise of God; and worshippers of the outer court entering into the blessedness of Christian experience! May this happy state be vouchsafed to all here assembled!

LVII.

CONFIRMATION OF THE DISCIPLES.*

Acts, xiv., 22: *Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith: and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Nov. 10, 1826, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

After preaching the gospel in different parts, the apostles always appear anxious to see the fruits of their labours. They were not like the fabled ostrich, which leaves its eggs on the sand, to be trodden

* From the notes of the Rev. Dr. Wilson.

under foot, but they had the tender feelings of a parent; they were fathers in Christ. They were more; they had the parental tenderness of the softer sex: "My little children," says Paul, "of whom I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you:" "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

This tenderness of affection appears in the history connected with the text. At Lystra and Derbe the apostles had endured the most violent treatment. Paul had been taken up as dead; but immediately, by a miracle, had been restored to life. We read of no effects of the stoning remaining on his body afterward, nor of any thing in him different from his usual health and vigour; we conclude, therefore, that a complete cure was instantaneously produced.

What fortitude, what patience, what magnanimity, appear in the apostles on this occasion! How fit to be chosen the witnesses of Christ's resurrection! So far from being deterred by the violence they suffered, they venture, not only into other churches and places, but return again to the very Lystra whence they had just returned by a miracle. Their purpose in visiting these cities is given in the text.

The office of the apostles was twofold. To sow the seed of instruction in the mind—to regenerate men by the Divine word to a heavenly life; this was their first object. When this was done, they secondly endeavoured to confirm their new converts—to lead them on—to corroborate and strengthen them—to teach them to bear the trials, and bring forth the fruits which it was the end and design of Christianity to produce.

The Church of England, indeed, confines the idea of confirmation to one particular rite. This, I think, is a mistake. I understand confirmation as a constant, oft-repeated duty, performed by the word of warning, of comfort, and of exhortation.

The first office was that of evangelists; the second, of pastors and teachers. It would be well if both offices were continued in the Church now—if there were evangelists to go about and plant the gospel where it is unknown, before men were collected into churches under pastors and teachers. But the object of the apostles' visit, as recorded in the text, was to confirm the souls of the disciples, to deepen the impressions of Divine truth, to instruct them more fully in the way of God, to guard them against temptation, and fortify them against the impression of fear.

I. They confirmed them by holding out the evidence of the religion they taught. They established their minds by bringing them back to their first principles. The apostles, doubtless, reiterated to them the great facts upon which Christianity was founded, and appealed to the miracles they had wrought among them in support of its Divine authority.

It is very important for the young to be confirmed in the principles and evidences of their faith. Many are seduced into infidelity be-

cause they never had a rational conviction of the truth of Christianity —never investigated its evidences—never understood the main course of that argument. Such persons may have had impressions, emotions, favourable prejudices, and thus have taken up the profession of the Christian religion; and where all this has been accompanied with humble penitence, and faith in the truth of the Scriptures, this may be enough. But in a religion that rests merely upon sentiment—upon circumstances—upon negative grounds, there is nothing to resist temptation. When the feelings subside, that religion is gone; there is nothing of principle and conviction to sustain their faith under a state of decayed sensibility. It would be happy for young people, in this vain age, to confirm themselves in the evidences of Christianity before they go out into the world. This might soon be done. A small treatise, such as that of Doddridge, in the three sermons on the evidences of Christianity, furnishes a summary of the powerful argument such as no sophistry of infidels has ever been able to subvert.

But the apostles not only thus confirmed the souls of the disciples, but,

II. Exhorted them to continue in the faith. They persuaded them, by all possible arguments, to adhere to the doctrine of Christianity, to hold it fast, to cleave to it with persevering faith, to yield themselves up fully to its influence.

Men may hold Christianity to be true, and yet never be under its proper influence, never continue in the faith. They may believe Christianity without acting upon it; their practical judgment and their conduct may remain the same as if Christianity were not true. But we must continue in the faith, obey its influence, and place conscience under its direction. Christianity has a Divine power to mould the soul more and more after its own image, the image of the Saviour.

To this end, we must have the same truths stated over and over again. It is not new food, but the constant return of the same simple food, which nourishes and preserves health. Thus, we do not teach you new things, but the same, and endeavour to bring your hearts into unison with them. They are Divine, living, efficacious principles. When they are heard in simplicity, they produce corresponding effects, though there may be a persuasion in the mind of the hearer that he has heard them before. The efficacy of the ministry consists very much in stirring up the minds of Christians by way of remembrance, recalling them to acknowledged principles. Truth is often a quiescent, inactive principle; a seed, not dead, perhaps, but yet not vigorous and vivifying. But by loosening the mould, so to speak, around it, it becomes pregnant again, and shoots forth with new life.

Thus we enforce and renew the impressions which truth has made. Faith admits of all manner of degrees; for every thing short of demonstration admits of degrees, and moral subjects do not allow of demonstration. The more we attend to the Christian doctrine, and fix our contemplations upon it, and renew and deepen the impressions of its truth, the more will our persuasion practically become strengthened,

and our faith be vigorous and productive. Truth becomes influential as it is brought into contact with the mind. It thus diffuses its powerful health throughout the soul.

The spiritual mind is in this way nourished; for attention to the acknowledged truths of Christianity feeds the spiritual life. There is an alienation of mind from God and goodness which grows in us if there be no efforts of attention, no care, no vigilance in the consideration of truth. And, on the other hand, there is a spirituality of mind which is corroborated and advanced as we bestow pains on religion, and fix our thoughts and contemplations on its doctrines, under the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

III. The apostles guarded the disciples from being turned away from the profession and practice of Christianity by tribulation. They told them "how that by much tribulation," many trials, various worldly discouragements, and persecutions, "they must enter the kingdom of God." It was a new thing to these converts to suffer for Christ: the Saviour had only just begun to put his cup into their hands. All Christians must suffer, though not in the same degree, or under similar circumstances, with those of the first age; through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom of God. There is a kingdom before them, and only one way to enter it, and that is by tribulation; and not by tribulation thinly scattered in the midst of flowery paths; but "by much tribulation," thickly sown and continually returning.

And St. Paul, doubtless, confirmed the souls of the disciples by his own conduct and experience. He showed, by his return to them after being stoned, his superiority to the influence of fear. "He comforted them that were in any trouble by the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God."

We are called to a certain portion of the same tribulation; or, if not, yet to others not less difficult to bear. There is an opposition between the world and the Church, which nothing can compose. The two bodies never can walk in union. "He that is born after the flesh persecuteth him that is born after the Spirit." The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman are at enmity together, and nothing can destroy this internal hostility but regenerating grace. The Christian must sacrifice his popularity, the esteem of men; must be willing to be despised by many, and accounted weak and extravagant; must forego many advantages, resist many lucrative openings, and choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." He must stand in a position to make any sacrifice for conscience' sake.

There are seasons in every man's life when he must make his choice, and show that he prefers eternity to all the vain advantages of this transient world.

Besides, Christians have to fight with the remains of corruption in their own hearts. They have to endure eclipses of the Sun of Righteousness. Indwelling sin will disturb their peace and joy. They are engaged in a real conflict, not merely with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this

world, with spiritual wickedness in high places. In this conflict the Christian must struggle and fight. It is Christ, indeed, that supplies all the strength, but the Christian himself must fight; it is he himself that wields the weapons, that makes the effort, that resists and overcomes; while Christ strengthens his arm, and gives the internal grace.

Christ, "the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings," and so must we be. The furnace must be kindled for us as much as for any of the saints of old. All the Church has walked in this way, patiently enduring the will of God. "Ye have need of patience," says the apostle, "that after ye have done the will of God, ye may inherit the promise." "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.

There is an arduous struggle in the Christian course. There must be a perpetual effort, a constant resuscitation of the powers of the mind. Who can deny himself and live a life of faith, surrounded as he is with objects full of seduction, but by an effort, a resolution, a courage not to be overcome, with an eye fixed upon the Captain of his salvation?

A man may live a life of worldly morality, and be applauded, and feel no conflict within or without; but if a man is truly spiritually-minded, and acts accordingly, he will have fightings and persecutions to endure. And one way of confirming the soul is to remind each other that this is necessary; that Jesus Christ did not deceive us, that He told us from the first to sit down and count the cost.

Are there, then, any before me in danger of being moved from their steadfastness? Let them recollect that these tribulations are the very test of their Christian perfection. Grace which is not tried can never be known to be genuine. God designs by these afflictions to humble you, and to prove you, to know what is in your heart.

Do not think that because discouragements arise you must decline the particular duties before you. Just the contrary. The more difficulties arise, the more it is the will of God, supposing the thing be in itself right, that you should go on. "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

And when we set the kingdom which is before us over against the trials in the way, there appears to be no comparison between them. Soon will the conflict be over; soon will the storms of the voyage give place to an eternal serenity.

Can we, then, for a moment hesitate as to our choice? Shall we not, like the apostles, "rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name?" Shall we not consider it, as they did, a gift vouchsafed by Divine goodness, to suffer for the sake of Christ? "To you," says the great apostle, "it is given, on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake."

Let us aim, then, at that rooted piety, which takes stronger hold and becomes more deeply fixed in consequence of our trials. The true Christian who has passed through much tribulation is ripened thereby for the glory and bliss of heaven. God has sufficient cordials

for his suffering servants to make them rejoice in tribulations. And the same God can imbitter all worldly prosperity to those who refuse to suffer for Him; and make it either awfully destructive in its consequences, or send his favour with it, which shall make them loathe their earthly comforts and pleasures. He has promised to give his afflicted servants "all things that pertain to life and godliness;" yea, that He "will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly."

LVIII.

CONTENTION BETWEEN BARNABAS AND PAUL.*

Acts, xv., 39: *The contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, May 6, 1830, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

No portion of the Scriptures is more interesting to the Christian Church in every age, and especially the present, than the book of the Acts. At a time when missions to the heathen are so extensively conducted by the different parts of the Christian world, the example of the primitive Church cannot be too deeply studied, whether by those who project or those who execute the missionary labours. There are, however, shades mingled with the bright parts of this history: the passage which you have heard records an occurrence which we might not have expected in so pure a society. I shall offer a few remarks, which arise out of this instructive incident.

With the circumstance itself you are well acquainted. Barnabas, it may be proper to notice, was by far an earlier convert to the gospel than Paul; he is mentioned as one of those converted on the day of Pentecost; he had introduced Paul to the apostles, who would not trust their recent persecutor, until "Barnabas brought him, and declared how he had seen the Lord on the way, and had preached boldly in the name of Jesus." Barnabas went with Paul to Antioch, where they laboured together during a whole year, and from which place the Holy Spirit sent them forth by a special commission, saying, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them:" the first example of a missionary being set apart for his office. Thus Barnabas, though not an apostle, was yet a minister of a higher order than others, as he was a teacher expressly commissioned from heaven, and so far, indeed, an apostle.

Yet these two excellent men differed in the manner stated. Mark, disgusted by the toil, was for returning to Jerusalem. This conduct was exceedingly disgraceful; yet there is no reason to

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

doubt that he was an eminently good man. Paul, some years after this event, desired to have him as a son associated with himself in the ministry, as Titus also had been, 2 Timothy, iv., 11: "Titus is gone to Galatia; only Luke is with me: bring Mark, for he is profitable to me in the ministry." Peter also mentions him as his son; and it was at the house of Mark that Peter made his sudden appearance from the prison.—1 Peter, v., 13. Acts, xii., 12.

The conduct of Mark, however, on the occasion referred to in the context, was certainly deserving of censure; and, on a dispassionate view of the circumstances, Paul appears to have acted right: Mark did not seem a proper person to be depended on in trials; and Barnabas, swayed by natural partiality, was not judicious in pressing his choice; he might, indeed, have known his nephew's sorrow and amendment more than Paul, yet to us it appears that Paul acted the wiser part of the two. A few practical observations, suggested by this occurrence, now deserve our attention.

1. The first is, that we should learn to expect considerable imperfections even in the best of men. Who could have supposed that Barnabas, peculiarly mentioned as "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," would have acted thus? With respect to Paul, not a word is needed; he evidently stood at the highest point of Christian excellence. Yet these two men—men of gigantic piety—failed in this manner. It was not a mere difference of opinion; it was a "sharp contention"—a paroxysm—for this is the word in the original—so that they could not act in concert.* Hence we should learn not to be surprised or discouraged when we discover faults in excellent men, since there were faults in those who formed the brightest ornaments of the primitive Church. We are apt to exaggerate the practical virtues of the first Christians. In love to God and zeal for his glory, they might greatly excel modern believers; but in correctness of conduct, they were probably not superior. So faulty were many of the Corinthians who had embraced the faith, that they made the holy communion an occasion of intemperance. We must not expect too much of any man: whenever we believe the heart to be right with God, we must exercise great tenderness in judging; and, instead of severity, we must employ mild reproof and admonition.

2. We should admire the ingenuousness of the sacred writers in recording the faults of the saints. As a perfect adherence to truth must accompany whatever is written under the direction of the Spirit of truth, it was to be expected that, in describing even the most illustrious propagators of Christianity, their faults should

* παροξυσμος. Each of these holy men probably forgot, on this occasion, that feature of Christian love, as portrayed by Paul: ἡ αγαπη ου παροξυνεται. Both exemplified their own acknowledgment, so recently and so beautifully expressed to the men of Lystra: ἡμεις ὁμοιοπαθεις εσμεν ὑμιν ανθρωποι, "we also are men of like passions with yourselves."—GRINFIELD.

be unveiled; and there appears a solicitude to present every thing in its natural light—to tell things as they were. Thus Peter is reproved for his dissimulation by Paul. His denial of his Lord is recorded by all the four evangelists; we hear of the two apostles contending for the highest place in their Master's kingdom; we hear of their intolerant spirit, in wishing to call down fire from heaven on their opponents, when Jesus said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Such is the remarkable candour that distinguishes these records from all others: and this is a proof of the Holy Spirit being the Guide of those who penned them; otherwise there must have been a degree of partiality, such as is found in every zealous historian of a party.

3. The differences of good men respect the means of doing good, not the object itself; they relate to the measures to be chosen, not to the end. Paul and Barnabas were equally influenced by the desire of serving Christ and doing good to men—equally ready to live and die for the same holy cause; yet they differed entirely on a point of practical prudence. The regenerate and the unregenerate differ in their motives and their ends: the one party are governed by regard to this world, the other by regard to eternity; but the differences of good men respect only minor arrangements for promoting the benefit of mankind and the glory of God. When, therefore, we see good men taking different ways to the same great end, what do we see but a repetition of the case before us? They may separately pursue their differing measures, but all are actuated by the same principles—all are embarked in the same cause. And this leads us to remark that, in such instances, they may and ought to separate, wishing each other "God speed." Paul and Barnabas were afterward employed in different parts of the same great field, in sowing the same heavenly seed; and where practical matters, or matters of discipline, are such that we cannot agree with each other, it is better quietly to separate, and act each on our own plan. Had this been always done, there would have been no oppression of the weaker party by the strong—no attempt to impose a yoke of uniformity on all.

4. Let us learn to admire the wisdom of Providence in overruling this evil for good, and making such separations subservient to the greater extension of the gospel. It is the manner of the Divine Being to act thus, turning things the least promising in their first appearance to ultimate advantage. In consequence of the dissension before us, Paul takes in Silas, and thus a new labourer is gained; and thus the differences of Christians lead to their separating into independent congregations (and to *me* it is clear that all churches were originally independent congregations), while each becomes a nucleus around which others are formed. The division of opinion leads to the division of labour; and this results in the greater usefulness to the whole. Thus the first churches sprang out of dissent. Much evil may at first be

blended with these separations; but by degrees it passes away, is quite forgotten, and a great enlargement of the means of grace ensues. Let me not, however, be mistaken, as encouraging separations. We are by no means to lend ourselves to a spirit of division and schism, than which nothing can be more opposed to the unity desired and taught by Christ. But, if we cannot agree, let us separate in love, as the different members of one body.

5. Let us remember that the differences of good men, though sharp at the moment, are short in duration. No doubt Paul and Barnabas were soon reconciled; and as to Mark, "Bring Mark with thee," says Paul to Timothy. He kept the door of his heart open to reconciliation, on a more correct estimate of Mark's character, and was ready to embrace him as a brother. This is our duty: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath; yea, let all wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." If others have the spirit of Christ, and love Him, it is at our peril that we reject them; and if we cannot now do much together, we should look forward with joy to that period when all will be one, all will worship in one place, join in one song, have one mind; when we shall all feel as one with each other, united to Christ as He is united to the Father. "Ephraim shall no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim." There is a greater approximation to this happy state, there is a greater unity among all the real and vital parts of the Christian Church, than there has ever yet been. Something of this spirit is felt in the holy communion; and, if it is delightful in a small company, oh! how delightful must it be in the great assembly of the Church triumphant, to celebrate the passover of the Lamb who was slain, who has redeemed us with his blood, and made us kings and priests to God forever and forever!

LIX.

THE FOUNDATION LAID IN ZION.*

1 Peter, ii., 6–8: *Wherefore it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

[Preached at Cambridge.]

Although the Saviour was sufficiently revealed under the former dispensations, as the object of faith and the foundation of human hope,

* Reported in the Pulpit, vol. xiii.

yet many things relating to Him which "were hid from ages and generations, are now made known to the saints;" and it is the peculiar province of inspired apostles to unlock and open the meaning of inspired prophets. Human reason is a bad guide without revelation, and fancy is a worse. It cannot, however, be reasonably doubted that the pious Jews, who lived in the days of the prophet, understood him as speaking in these words of the promised Messiah, and of the blessings of his great salvation. The Apostle Peter has, indeed, put this matter beyond all doubt. Viewed in the superior light of the New Testament Scriptures, every part of the passage before us evidently holds forth evangelical instruction. In the former part of the chapter the prophet is denouncing the judgments of God against the ten tribes of Israel; and he is pointing out the sensuality of the people whom he was addressing; that in the prospect of these judgments they had recourse to human policies and arms of flesh. He points out their inadequacy to sustain them in seasons of actual danger; and he proposes and substitutes the real and proper object of confidence in the words of the text. These prophecies, we have reason to believe, in their ultimate sense, penetrated to a very distant period of time; to the judgments which God had determined to execute upon the unbelieving Jewish people, and to the great salvation which He was pleased to manifest in the person of his Son. They give an illustrious description of *Him* as the only foundation of human hopes. He is frequently styled the *foundation* in the New Testament. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Peter describes the Church of God as a building composed of "living stones," and placed upon the foundation laid in Zion. "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." The variation of the words from the passage before us is sufficiently accounted for, by recollecting that the apostle made use of the Septuagint; therefore, instead of substituting "ye shall not make haste," the apostle says, "shall not be confounded;" which is expressive, in figurative terms, of the prophet's assertion, that such as are overtaken with danger, though it be the most formidable, resting upon this foundation shall not make haste, nor "be confounded, world without end."

After having set aside other foundations of confidence and hope, the Divine Being claims the prerogative of laying the only foundation for human sinners to build their hopes upon.

To lay a foundation of hope and confidence under the greatest calamity, is the work of God alone; and it is that which is the most illustrious of his operations.

This foundation of peace, safety, holiness, and salvation, is not suggested by the human mind, is not the discovery of human reason. God is its sole author; and had he not communicated it to us, our prospects had been dark indeed! "Behold, I lay in Zion," &c; and as JEHOVAH claims the glory of the excellence of this foundation, we may be assured that it is in the highest esteem in his sight, as well as worthy of our regard and admiration. In this grand device, all his

perfections are illustrated and glorified, in the view of angels and men, in the highest possible degree. Thus he condescends to speak of it: "Behold," &c. In the Hebrew, the words are "a foundation, a foundation on which whosoever trusteth or believeth, shall not make haste." We cannot doubt that, under these magnificent expressions, the Holy Spirit means to point out the great Saviour of the world as the foundation of human hopes. It will be my endeavour to show how great a work it is to lay such a firm foundation as guilty creatures may build on with eternal safety.

There are those who have not been aware of any difficulty in such a work, or of any impediment in the way. In consequence of which, they see nothing in the person and work of the Saviour; He grows up before them as a root out of the dry ground, and when they see Him, there is no form or comeliness in Him, nor any beauty for which they should desire Him. They have not had any just conceptions of their true state and condition by nature, as it is represented in Scripture. We cannot be prepared to estimate the value of salvation, but in just proportion to our sense and conviction of a state of danger and misery to which it bears relation. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." No person that is not awakened by the Spirit to cry after salvation is properly apprized of its infinite concern and importance. It appears to be the most momentous inquiry, "How shall man be just with God?" yet the difficulties attending this are of a peculiar nature; no human capacity fully conceives of them. Men possess astonishing powers of mind; but when the question is, how we may be reconciled to God, finite understanding leaves us without an answer, without a resource. We can barely hope that there may be some way wherein such guilty creatures may be pardoned without infringement upon Divine justice. The difficulty attending this case may be perceived by considering what is requisite to lay the sure foundation of human hopes.

1st. If the Majesty of heaven is insulted and his just displeasure provoked, some way must be devised in which the terrible effects thereof may be averted. In human government, how necessary is order! But when we consider what insult is cast upon the majesty and laws of God by the apostacy of millions in every age, who can fail to see the necessity of some method by which the pardon of sin may be rendered consistent with the glory of the Divine character and government? And here is a difficulty which human reason must forever have failed to solve.

2dly. There is a law—the constitution of moral reason—under which, by the light of nature, men are laid. In the volume of revelation its duties are described and its sanctions enforced. This law is absolute, because it is the exact truth of what God has a just right to require of his rational and accountable creatures. Hence its sentence, if it be once violated, can never be reversed. It is a dispensation of strict and impartial justice. This law denounces the curse of God in case of failure of that obedience which it requires, and promises life to those who render perfect obedience to its holy precepts. The curse

of the law, being interpreted, extends to the condemnation of hell, which is, by the very nature of God and the human soul, rendered eternal in its duration. It comprehends that second death which consists in the destruction both of body and soul in hell. "The wages of sin is death." This "law is holy, and just, and good." It is not only a dispensation of righteousness without iniquity, but is a dispensation of rigour without promising any strength to the weak, or any mercy to the guilty. When it has convinced us of sin, and condemned us to death, it has performed its office. The law of God, as it is the deliberate expression of the Divine will, and of his moral character, must in some sense be as immutable and permanent as his own holy nature. And since sin is the object of the hatred and displeasure of God, how is it possible that guilty creatures can be pardoned, except there be some method in which to satisfy the righteous demands of his holy law? Law, you know, in *human* governments, is that which is most vindictive. This is considered as the stay and support of just authority; and to be suffered to treat it with contempt, would be considered in the highest degree unpardonable. But the empire of God is infinitely more grand, and his law more awfully important.

If we consider it in application to the case of an *individual* sinner, it will appear the most difficult question to answer, "How shall man be just with God?" But when we consider that the Divine Being was determined to make a declaration of pardon to the guilty *human race*, the difficulty is augmented in just proportion to the extent of mercy: and in the general order and rule of justice in *this* case, "who *then* can be saved?" These considerations may serve to show that *it is impossible for man to save himself*—that all hope of procuring our own salvation is precluded by the awful peculiarity of our case. It must be effected by another, who is *able*, and as *willing* to pay

"The rigid satisfaction, death for death."

Man must be pardoned in a way consistent with the honours of the Divine character. By many it is considered that *repentance* is sufficient to atone for sin. But is this consistent with the conduct of any government whatever? Why, then, should it be with the Divine? Is it usual to allow mere sorrow for past sins to stand instead of a complete obedience; or is it usual to make sincere confession to answer to the charge of guilt? That it may in certain cases *mitigate* the sentence, is not denied; but that it should be a standing rule, is certainly a violation of all the analogies of human justice. The *essence* of repentance is the sense of our deserving punishment; to take to ourselves shame and confusion of face; to acknowledge that we have justly deserved the Divine displeasure. It is to "flee from the wrath to come"—to flee for *mercy;* and if a penitent were to quit his sin, and not, at the same time, to confess he was worthy of the punishment of the law, we should conceive that his repentance was not genuine. Does the making *profession* constitute true repentance, if the profession be false? Where men are awakened to a sense of the truth, this kind of sophistry will not stand for a moment. When John

said, "Bring forth *fruit* meet for repentance," it plainly implied that breaking off sins was the chief, the *proper* fruit of repentance. But the law demands unfeigned obedience. It says, "Do this, and thou shalt live." It makes no reckoning on account of repentance. Justice, let it be remembered, is an essential feature in the Divine character. He is represented as the righteous and the holy God. Hence, it appears plain that man cannot save himself by repentance, or restore himself to the favour of God by his own obedience. To afflict ourselves may be an evidence of our contrition; but can that be any compensation for the neglect of the known, prescribed will of God?

Such, then, is the state of all mankind: they are "without hope and without God in the world;" and as all mankind are sinners, and must be dependant on Divine mercy for pardon and salvation, it must lie in the heart of the Deity whether He will have compassion or not. They are without strength, and in themselves considered, are reduced to a hopeless state. Men are "dead in trespasses and sins:" they must be quickened by a Divine power, or death spiritual will be succeeded by death eternal.

Since this is the case, it must be by another that he is saved, if saved he is. And here, again, the difficulty appears to increase upon us; for the person who saves man must be himself a DIVINE person, if he is a substitute for sinners; for he alone can have power to save them. Besides, the Scriptures denounce the curse upon man for sin: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them." But if a *divine* person is substitute for man, he is incapable by his perfection of completing our salvation. He cannot endure the penalty of the law. Divinity is incapable of suffering. How, then, shall the Divine justice be satisfied? This is the difficulty. *Power* can only overcome *physical* difficulties of a temporal nature. He must be a *divine* person only, to be capable of saving; but a divine person cannot be capable of suffering. It was necessary, then, that the Saviour should be *divine* to *merit*, and *human to suffer*. It was necessary that there should be some relation between the substitute and the being whom he represented. This was shadowed out under the Old Testament dispensation. The Redeemer was always a kinsman. Thus, the blessed Redeemer took upon himself our human nature. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He himself also took part of the same. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." But if He were a *man*, as the whole race were corrupt, his obedience could not be perfect. There was no substitute found among *them* that was perfect.

When you consider these things, you should not be surprised at the Divine Being claiming this work as *his own*. All the works of creation are his, and "we are his workmanship," for "He made us, and not we ourselves." But there is none of his works so great as the laying in Zion this foundation. He was with *Him* before all worlds, and was "set up from everlasting" to be the Redeemer of lost man. "In the fulness of time," He united to his Divine the human nature;

thus there became a fitness in Him to be the substitute of sinners. And lest He himself should have sins and infirmities, He was miraculously conceived: "He was made in *the likeness of sinful flesh*." Here every purpose was provided for: the human nature rendered Christ capable of suffering, and the Divine nature seemed the spotless purity of his humanity. It being a *human* sacrifice, made it a fit representation of sinners of the human race. The same person that died upon the cross, was the express image of his Father's person, and yet, "the *man*, Jesus Christ." Hence we see the propriety of the representation of the Prophet Isaiah: "The government shall be upon his shoulders." His name was with propriety called "WONDERFUL," for He was at once human and Divine; capable of saving, and capable of suffering; "mighty to save," yet who, doing this, could not "save himself."

This foundation was laid in Zion, first, at our Lord's incarnation. But with respect to mankind at large, the salvation was not proclaimed till after his resurrection; it was then proposed as the "foundation laid in Zion." Had He proposed *himself* as a *pattern*, there was no fault found in Him; but proposing himself as a *foundation*, He struck at their pride; they could not bear that He who was despised of men should be the only foundation; this was what their prejudice could not endure; this was that offence of the cross which nothing could abate. The apostles made it the most prominent feature of their ministry. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." The very first thing they testified was, that there is a Saviour of the world, and that there is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved. This was the soul of their ministry.

But there is such a disposition in men to have recourse to refuges of lies! Hence this very foundation is represented as "a stumbling stone and a rock of offence." Finding that there is no other way of building but upon Christ, they stumble. But they that stumble at this foundation are broken to pieces; and those who oppose it, that stone falling upon them "shall grind them to powder." True Christians come to this foundation, and are built upon it for eternity. They come out of themselves; they renounce and relinquish all trust in themselves. They see they have no righteousness that can commend them to the Divine favour, and are sensible that nothing can satisfy the awful attributes of the Deity but the sufferings of the Son of God. They come, therefore, to Jesus, and place their souls upon Him, and are assured, upon Divine revelation, that they never shall be confounded. When the Judge at the last day is presented to their view, seated on his throne, and all nations are placed before Him, they will have no reason to be dismayed. They have found satisfaction in the Lamb of God. HE will pronounce the sentence, and He must deny himself if He bring into condemnation any of those who have fled to Him for refuge.

It is peculiarly necessary that we mark the majesty of that great

and glorious Being who laid the foundation. "Behold, *I* lay in Zion a chief corner-stone."

This stone is indeed a *tried* stone; it was tried before it was laid as the foundation. Jesus Christ was amply tried by temptations, hunger, pain, and thirst; by the mocking of his enemies, the desertion of his friends, and by the combined powers of darkness; and his holiness sustained all. He went through the whole scene of his sufferings, brought in an everlasting righteousness, and made an entrance into glory. He conquered all the powers of darkness; He rolled away the stone that lay at the sepulchre of all our hopes; He made peace by the blood of his cross, and proclaimed it "to them that were afar off, and to them that were near." He triumphed most of all upon the cross, which removed all the clouds from the brow of the majesty of heaven. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And He was "a precious corner-stone." He was "the brighness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." He was the solace of his heart. "He was with Him as one brought up by Him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before Him. God had but one Son, and "He gave *Him* up for us all."

And, it is added, "*a sure foundation.*" This is the highest and most important quality of a foundation. What an edifice does this sure foundation sustain! It is sufficient to support the sinking hopes of the universe! It is sufficient to support the hopes of his creatures in the prospect of death and eternal judgment. Many, when Peter preached his sermon on the day of Pentecost, were pricked to the heart; they were not sitting at their ease, as many of you are; but when the three thousand were converted, and said, "Sirs, what must we do to be saved?" He was then found a sure foundation. They that put their trust in Him were not confounded. They beheld the great God arraigned before them as a just and sin-avenging God; but, no sooner had they a sight of the Saviour, than their consciences were purified and their hearts comforted. The next that we hear of them was, that they received the word, and "continued steadfast in the apostle's doctrine, and breaking of bread and in prayers." They now counted all things as dross, compared with Christ and Him crucified. And since that time, for eighteen hundred years, this foundation has been proved. The blessed Redeemer has been exhibited in all parts of the world, and thousands have been added to Him, and built upon Him. But many have perished on all *sides* of this foundation. They did not lay their hopes upon it; they were not humbled sufficiently to come to the Saviour. It is not coming near to Christ that will save us. "Ye will not come *to me* that ye might have life," said the Saviour; and thus we are compelled to say to our hearers that *they* will not come to Him for salvation. But never do we find any that are yielding themselves up to the Saviour, but they have peace in believing, and a lively hope of eternal glory. Death changes his features; and as eternity draws near, things present are absorbed in the prospect of things to come, and the interests of time lose themselves in

those of eternity. Were millions and millions of worlds thus to place their trust in this Saviour, He would be a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of them all. He is "a *sure* foundation, chosen of God, and precious."

And what, my brethren, do you intend to make of this foundation? If you do not make *any* account of it, do not imagine that you are in safety; remember, that to them who believe on Him, He is a sure foundation; "but to those who believe not, He is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence." He is too great an object to be passed; you *must* come into collision somewhere or other. "If you neglect this great salvation," you cannot escape. And for *Him* to be "the savour of death unto death"—oh, what an awful end! And what a strange thing it is to extract damnation from the source of salvation. Yet such is the consequence of rejecting the Saviour.

And what, my friends, do you intend to do *with yourselves* if you reject the Saviour? You will be called to account. Our blessed Saviour, when he exhorted his followers not to labour for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life, and they said, "Lord, evermore give us this bread; Jesus said, I am the bread of life;" and then added, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." This word demands your *immediate* attention. Sinner, hast thou fled to Christ? Has the blood of Christ passed upon thy conscience? If not, commit not thyself to rest this night, give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids, till thou hast found favour with God. "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." God is the Being who proposes it; and you can never be saved from the ruins of the fall until you are united to the life-giving Saviour, according to the directions of the gospel.

Let us all accept the present occasion, and let us seize, let us secure the present moment. Let us recollect the greatness of the object presented to us. It is salvation! Do you ask why we are so earnest in pressing you to build on this foundation? It is the foundation of eternal hopes — of escape from the wrath to come. It is the salvation of the immortal soul which is connected with this foundation. Nothing can hurt us, living or dying, compared with the neglect of Christ: fleeing to any self-dependance, trusting to any thing besides Him, we are undone.

If these are our foundation instead of Christ, we shall be confounded forever. It is only upon the foundation which God hath laid in Zion that we can stand secure; and of this He hath said, "He that believeth shall never be confounded." Amen.

LX.

THE SAYING WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION.*

1 Timothy, i., 15 : *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*

[Preached in the Clifton Ark, or Seaman's Floating Chapel, May, 1828.]

The great apostle who wrote these words experienced, as you will remember, a very remarkable and miraculous conversion to the faith of the gospel. He was on his way to Damascus, for the express purpose of persecuting even to death the followers of Christ, when he was suddenly arrested by Divine power and grace, and led to "preach the faith which he once destroyed." As a demonstration of the reality of his conversion, he devoted, through the remainder of his life, all the energies of his great spirit to the service of the Saviour; and his wonderful conversion, thus established by the long course of his subsequent labours and sufferings, has been often and justly alleged as a decisive evidence of the truth and Divine origin of Christianity.

In the connexion of the text, he refers to his conversion; and then, as a grand inference from that supernatural event, he proceeds, in the words chosen for our present meditation, to affirm the truth and importance of the gospel. As if he had said, this is the proposition: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:" would you have a demonstration of its truth, a living proof of the reality of His divinity and His salvation? Behold it in me, "the chief of sinners," converted to the saving faith of Jesus Christ!

It is not, however, my intention to show from the conversion of the Apostle Paul that the gospel is an authentic revelation from God; but simply to open and apply the well-known and ever-memorable words of the text for our Christian instruction and benefit.

In order to this, it may be proper to consider, first, the end for which Jesus Christ came into the world; and, secondly, the declaration which the apostle makes regarding the truth and importance of this fact.

I. First, we are to consider the end for which the Saviour appeared.

1. When the apostle says that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," it is implied in such language that He existed before He came. The expression "came into the world," taken by itself alone, has a peculiar meaning, as applied to the Son of God; it denotes His Divine pre-existence; and its meaning is unfolded by himself in those remarkable words, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." It is not, however, merely said of Christ, as, perhaps, it might have been said of any other man, that He "came into the world;" it is added that He came with this express design,

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

"to save sinners." Now, whoever places himself in a particular situation for a specific purpose, must have existed prior to his making that choice. And Christ is here represented as having acted with a deliberate view of futurity; a view which He must have entertained before his appearance in our nature. He proposed to himself one great object; and, with that in his mind, He entered the world. He assumed our nature, in consideration that it is ours; consideration exercised in a state of being prior to his assuming it. He formed the plan of saving sinners before "He came into the world," where it was to be executed.

Surely, my brethren, it is a most extraordinary event for a person to come from one world into another, and take up his abode in that which was not his proper habitation. Angels have often visited this world; but their visits have been always transient; they never "dwelt among us," they never "pitched their tent" here below. He of whom the apostle speaks in the text is the only Person that ever left another world for this, to dwell among us as one of our own race. And what an exchange was that which He made! He left a world of glory for one of meanness, a world of bliss for one of misery, a world of purity for one of crime. God did, indeed, "make a new thing in the earth," when HE, who "in the beginning was, was with God, and was God;" HE, in the fulness of time, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" when HE, "in whom was LIFE," as in its fountain, "became obedient unto DEATH, even the death of the cross!"

2. Now there must have been some great end proposed in this wonderful proceeding of Jesus Christ; and that end was, according to the text, "to save sinners." His name, as the evangelist informs us, "was called Jesus, because He saves his people from their sins." He did many things while He was on earth; but this was the end of all that He did; all besides was subservient to this. He taught the will of God; He explained the Divine law in the most perfect manner, without the least fear of man; He wrought stupendous miracles in proof of his mission; He imbodied the character of God, and exhibited a pattern of holiness, so faultless and complete, that He could say even to his bitterest enemies, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and entirely separate from sinners," whose earthly habitation and whose human nature He shared.

But this was not all: this was not the chief end of his coming into the world; had He stopped here, sinners must have fallen short of salvation. Instruction and example alone would never have saved us from our sins. Every man, let it be supposed, has some degree of light afforded him in his natural conscience, sufficient, if he would but faithfully use it, to direct him in the path of duty: this makes him a responsible agent; but this can bring him no consolation for past offences. To exhibit a pattern of perfect holiness, may afford an impressive lesson to those that never sinned; it may animate them to pursue higher degrees of excellence; but what comfort can it yield to those who are conscious that they have often and deeply offended? The splendour of such an example, instead of inspiring them with

hope and peace, would serve only to give them a clearer view of their guilt and wretchedness ; to render them more loathsome in their own eyes ; and to disturb an accusing conscience with gloomy apprehensions of futurity.

It is astonishing that any should have supposed that Christ came only to leave us an example. He came, indeed, to do this ; but He came to do much more than this. Had He done no more, He would have come, no doubt, as a great light of the world ; but that light would have principally served to make our darkness visible, and open a darker prospect beyond the grave. He came, therefore, most especially, in this respect, to save sinners. He saw that all were lost by nature, and He came to seek and to save that which was lost. If He performed wonders, it was chiefly that He might prove himself to be the promised Saviour of prophecy ; if He illustrated the law of God both by precept and example, both by doing and suffering, it was that He might give us deeper views of sin ; " for by the law," whether taught or exemplified, " is the knowledge of sin ;" it was that by his perfect obedience He might magnify and honour that law which we have broken. His great end in all was to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. According to his own declaration, He " gave himself a ransom for us." As the prophet Isaiah had long before so distinctly predicted, " He was wounded for our transgressions ; He made his soul an offering for sin ; and Jehovah laid on Him the iniquities of us all." As his own Divine nature was incapable of suffering, He united it with ours ; the Father prepared for Him a body, as the material and the medium of his sacrifice ; He assumed the nature of transgressors, though without transgression of his own : his deity gave such a value, his humanity such a suitableness, to his sufferings on our account, that God could be at once " just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Here was a greater vindication of the Divine character, a greater proof of God's hatred of sin, a greater display of his essential holiness and justice, than could have been given by the severest punishment He might have inflicted on those who had sinned. The death of Christ was sacrificial ; and when He cried on the cross, " It is finished," He meant that the propitiation for our sins was then consummated. He was predicted in this character by the prophets ; He was prefigured in it by the types of the law ; and in the third chapter to the Romans, the apostle gives a very clear account of the righteousness of God, or his method of justifying sinners without the law, but witnessed both by the law and the prophets, and now manifested in Jesus Christ ; " whom God," says he, " hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood." This great doctrine of the gospel was peculiarly represented by the sacrifice of the paschal lamb ; in correspondence with which, and as the substance of that shadow, " Christ, our passover, was sacrificed for us ;" " the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world."

It is by the exhibition of this great fact, my brethren, by the preaching of " Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," that sinners are brought to the knowledge of the way of salvation. Whoever believes with

his heart, and confesses with his mouth, that Jesus Christ is his only Saviour; whoever, by faith, casts himself entirely on this Divine sacrifice for sin, he is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses; Christ becomes to him the wisdom of God, which provides for his righteousness, his sanctification, his complete and final redemption from sin and death.

This, my brethren, is the primary part of that salvation, of which Christ is the author and finisher. This is the new and living way, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, by which we are invited to draw near and enter into the holiest, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. This is the true mercy-seat: Christ himself is set forth by God as the mercy-seat, on which the Father is enthroned, and from which He issues the invitation, "Peace, peace to those that were afar, as well as to those that were nigh." Every one who comes to God by this way is adopted as a child of God, and admitted as an heir of glory.

Still, this is not all that Christ came to effect: something yet remains, and that not less important to our perfect recovery. For sin disqualifies us for happiness, as well as renders us unworthy of it: we require to be delivered from its inherent misery, as well as from its deserved condemnation: the power of sin must be subdued, as well as its guilt pardoned: there must be a change wrought in the heart, the carnal must become spiritual, the disposition and affections must be renewed and raised; there must be produced a meetness for the undefiled inheritance of those, and only those, who are sanctified. And Christ came also to give the Holy Spirit: He came to open the wells of purifying influence on the soul. The Spirit was not given in full measure, until He, who had promised it, was glorified: He was exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance, or a new mind, as well as to give the remission of sins. The faith of Christ, accompanied by the Divine influence, purifies the heart; and the Spirit of grace carries on the work of sanctification, until the believer is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and presented faultless before the throne of God.

All this expensive machinery of redemption would never have been set on foot, if we had not been sinners. Our extremity was God's opportunity: where our sin had abounded, his grace found room much more to abound; so that we may well exclaim, in adoring wonder, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," displayed in this incomparable fact, that "Jesus Christ came into the world TO SAVE SINNERS!"

II. In the second place, let us attend to the declaration which the apostle makes concerning the truth and the importance of this great fact; when he pronounces it "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation."

1. First, he calls it "a faithful saying." This implies both that it is true, and that it contains matter of promise and consolation.

The first question with a sinner, awakened to a sense of his situation before God, will naturally be, "Is there salvation for me? is the

gospel true ?" There is salvation, we answer, for the chief of sinners that sincerely seeks it ; the gospel is " a faithful saying." God, who cannot lie, has pledged his word ; staked, as it were, his deity ; interposed his oath ; sworn by himself, because He could by none greater, " that, by two immutable things," the word and the oath of God, " we might have strong consolation," whoever among us, my brethren, " have fled for refuge to the hope set before us." To remove all doubt and fear on the subject, to give us the fullest satisfaction in our faith, God has anxiously hedged round this precious truth with proofs of every kind. By the most stupendous and varied miracles, making it evident that Christ was sent by God ; by his life of perfect holiness, proving his alliance with the Source of all that is holy ; by his resurrection from the grave, setting the seal of the Almighty Father upon his finished work ; by prophecies that point Him out to be the very person designed as the Messiah ; by the purity of his doctrine and his precepts ; by their effect upon the hearts of all who embrace the gospel, and experience its power : by these, and a vast variety of particular evidences, crowding upon us from every side, it is proved, to the utmost extent of moral demonstration, that Jesus Christ is the faithful and true Witness ; that the gospel of Christ is the truth of God.

Here, indeed, we are overwhelmed with proofs ; and the only difficulty is to select out of so many. There is one, however, which speaks to all, and which alone is all-sufficient : the testimony of personal experience ; " the witness in himself," which every believer of the gospel possesses in the sanctifying and consoling effects of gospel truth on his own soul : an evidence independent of every other, intelligible to the poorest and most unlearned, ever growing in its clearness and force, and infinitely more satisfying than any arguments of a merely historical nature ; an evidence which all the sophistry of unbelievers can never impair. In short, there exists no truth, or, at least, no supernatural truth, which is so abundantly confirmed to our belief as this, which is the greatest, beyond comparison, of all truths to us ; this, which is the corner-stone of our religion, the resting-place of our hope towards God : and the only account that can be given why any should be found to disbelieve and reject it is, that " they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil ;" they wilfully shut their eyes against the light of heaven : this, as our Saviour declares, is their condemnation.

The longer good men continue in the serious reception of that " faithful saying" which the text records, the longer they go on in an humble reliance on Christ as their Saviour, the more deeply they are convinced that He is such indeed ; and, when their dying hour arrives, they are enabled to repose, or even to triumph, in this conviction, and to say with the patriarch, " I know that my Redeemer liveth ;" or with the apostle, " I am not ashamed of my hope ; for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." I might appeal to the experience of every serious Christian, whether these things are not so. But if they are, the gospel of Christ is true ; the intelligence of a Saviour for sinners is " a faithful saying." Pure and

divine consequences like these can result only from a pure and divine source. None can account for such effects without admitting the heavenly original of Christianity. Moral good and religious good coalesce: all good effects of a moral kind are of the nature of God, and originate from the Fountain of all good.

2. That "Jesus Christ came to save sinners" is a saying, as the apostle adds, "worthy of all acceptation." This, as might be expected, is a high eulogium. There are very few kinds of information that are deserving of such a character as this; very few articles of intelligence that are important or interesting to persons of every description. That species of knowledge which is most valuale to some may be entirely foreign and superfluous to others. But this great truth is universally interesting; this is equally important to all, young or old, rich or poor, learned or unlettered, prince or peasant; "Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free;" all alike are concerned to know and believe that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." For all alike are sinners: every one is by nature guilty before his Maker: every one is heir to that carnal mind which is declared to be enmity with God: every one is hastening towards an eternal state of being: every one must die, must go alone to Him with whom we have to do; must stand before "the great white throne;" must "hear the voice of the Son of Man." "But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?" To whom can it be safe to dispense with "so great salvation," to pass by the only refuge from the wrath to come? to venture into eternity without a Saviour? when all are under the power of that law which pronounces every one accursed that continues not in obedience to all its commands; and, unless the curse of that law be removed by the grace of the gospel, it must remain in force forever! Reject the offered salvation, and you die in your sins! Receive the offered salvation, and you pass from death to life, "eternal life, the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

"A saying worthy of all acceptation"—worthy the acceptance of men in every age: of those to whom it was first proclaimed near two thousand years ago: of all to whom it has ever since been proposed: of all that shall ever, to the end of time, hear the joyful tidings. A Saviour given to sinners; the only expiation of guilt; the only balm for the sorrows of the soul: the grand catholicon; the fountain of living water, from the smitten rock, ever freely flowing for all that thirst. Well may the gospel be called "the everlasting gospel:" it accommodates itself to all the vicissitudes of time, all the changes of the world, all the varied circumstances of society: it takes every individual apart; speaks to him by himself; treats him in his true character, his real situation, as belonging to a race that has fallen; as one of a family that must take up the prophet's mournful confession, "The crown is fallen from our head; wo unto us, for we have sinned!" And, having shown us our misery, the gospel informs us of its remedy; having convinced us of sin, it assures us that "Jesus Christ has come to save sinners."

"A saying worthy of all acceptation:" worthy to awaken and en-

gage every noble emotion of the human soul. Some communications appeal to particular feelings of our nature: this is suited to fill the whole heart, to call into action all that warms, and animates, and expands the breast. Here is matter for glad surprise, for intense and exulting admiration; such as the apostle felt when he exclaimed, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" such as was felt by those first disciples, who, at the sight of their risen Saviour, "believed not for joy, and wondered." To him that has ears to hear, this is the most joyful sound, this is the most melodious music that ever saluted, or ever can salute the ear of sinful, dying man. What a theme for enraptured astonishment, that the Lord of glory should have descended to this low abode of sin and sorrow, to save his rebellious creatures, and overcome evil with good! Never, my brethren, can a period arrive, in infinite duration, when the delightful wonder produced by such an event can wear out: it must continue fresh and unimpaired throughout eternity! Even angels, though not themselves the subjects of redeeming grace, rejoice to join the song of praise which redeemed sinners raise to the Lamb that was slain; while, with a sublime curiosity, they desire to look into the unfathomable wonders of human redemption!

Here, again, is a theme equally fitted to inspire sacred gratitude and love; for who can look upon the Son of God coming in great humility into his own world, and there rejected by his own people; doing only good, and bearing only evil; weeping, agonizing, and dying on the cross, without having his heart melted in grateful tenderness, and proving that "we love Him because He first loved us?" "In this verily God commendeth his love to us, that, when we were sinners, enemies to God, Christ died for us;" and this, if any thing, must awaken our love to God—love to Him who gave his only Son—love to Him who gave himself; thus proving his infinite propensity to benevolence towards his creatures.

Here, once more, is the strongest incentive to zeal in desiring and promoting the diffusion of the gospel. Those who receive in their own hearts this glad and glorious message, must wish to extend its reception wherever sinners may be found; must wish the name of the Saviour to be wafted on every wind of heaven, to every ear of man; must wish that all should sit down with themselves to partake of that rich feast of spiritual dainties which God has spread for all nations. The spirit of the gospel is not selfish or narrow; not a spirit of monopoly, that would limit the enjoyment of its blessings: it is a generous, and enlarged, and diffusive spirit, like that which manifested itself in the first apostles when Andrew told Peter, and Philip told Nathaniel, of Him whom they had found; like that which animated the woman of Samaria when she hastened to her friends, saying, "Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" The motto prescribed to Christians is, "Freely ye have received, freely give:" since Christ came to save sinners, Christians must desire that, wherever sinners are found, they should be made acquainted with his salvation.

In conclusion of this deeply important subject, we may infer from it, first, the stupendous value of the human soul. When the Maker of the world came into it, for what purpose did He come? Did He come to promote those arts and sciences which adorn society, and open new sources of national wealth and glory? No, my brethren, an infinitely greater and better purpose engaged his thoughts; and that purpose was to save the soul. Surely the "principalities and powers in heavenly places," when they beheld the amazing spectacle of "God manifest in the flesh," would inquire what could be the object of this wondrous union of natures and exchange of worlds! The answer is very briefly, yet completely, given in the text: it was "to save sinners." He, in his all-capacious mind, saw, in such an object, that which would "satisfy Him for the travail of his soul;" which would justify Him in so expensive a method of attaining his object; which would warrant such an act of immeasurable condescension, such a union of Deity and humanity, such an exchange of heaven for earth! And He who, to save the soul, made such an exchange, might well demand, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Do not, then, make light of that which He so highly valued. Do not despise that immortal pearl which you bear within you, and which, polished by his grace, may be fitted to shine hereafter forever in the crown of his glory! The interest of your whole being, your endless existence, is here concerned. If you neglect the only salvation, you are lost: if you seek no acquaintance with "Christ, the hope of glory," with what feeling can you look forward to your future state, but a fearful presentiment of the wrath to come?

But, secondly, and in the last place, we are reminded by the text what consolation every one is entitled to, who simply and sincerely feels his need of the Saviour. Never permit yourself to suppose that your sins form an objection to your being saved by Him who expressly came to save sinners. A physician will never refuse to apply his remedies, if he believes them to be suitable, because the case before him is one of an inveterate and dangerous nature: such a case, he considers, peculiarly demands his aid. And if you feel yourself a great offender, this great salvation is peculiarly adapted to your need: if you esteem yourself "the chief of sinners" (and every serious penitent will be such in his own esteem, because, know what he may of the sins of others, he must always know far more of his own), then this Saviour, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him, is peculiarly the Saviour for you: "He came to save sinners, of whom I," the apostle adds, "am chief." In being a sinner, you stand precisely in that state in which, if you had not stood, it would have been impossible that you could have been saved by Christ: as it is, you are in the only predicament which He came into the world to relieve: as his remedy is adapted to your malady, so your malady is proportioned to his remedy: a great Saviour requires, as He is required by, a great sinner. Go, therefore, to the throne of grace; contrite, yet comforted; penitent, yet confident! Appeal to the Saviour;

appeal, in his name, to the Father, and you shall never be cast out: your sins shall be forgiven; your heart shall be renewed; the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, shall be established in your soul; Christ, by his Spirit, will manifest himself to you, and abide in you here, helping your weakness and comforting your sorrows; and at last He will receive you to himself, that where He is you may also be; and that there, with the innumerable multitude of redeemed and glorified spirits, you may forever behold the glory, and celebrate the love of Him who once, in the fulness of time, "came into the world to save sinners."

LXI.

CHRIST THE OBJECT OF TRUST TO THE GENTILES.*

ROMANS, xv., 12: *In Him shall the Gentiles trust.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, August 31, 1828.]

IT is one of the glorious characteristics of the Messiah, as portrayed in prophecy, that He should enlarge his dominion over the whole earth. In the preceding sentences the apostle quotes several passages of the Old Testament relative to the admission of the Gentiles into the Church. This he does with a view to conciliate the Jews, by whom the Gentiles were contemptuously regarded as "dogs," as naturally excluded from the covenant and the mercy of God. But God, as he had argued in a former chapter, is the God, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also. And Isaiah, whom he quotes in the text, had distinctly predicted the Messiah as "a Root of Jesse," which, though it might appear as "a root in a dry ground," spoiled of its branches and without appearance of its vegetating, should yet "stand for an ensign to the people." "He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles trust."

From the last words I shall take occasion to consider, first, the principle of trust in its general nature; secondly, some qualities of the Messiah, which render Him an object of trust; thirdly, and lastly, some leading properties of this trust in Jesus Christ.

I. The exercise of trust, regarded as a general principle, is necessary to the existence of society. The evidence of character is not the cause of our confidence in others; the first instance of trust cannot be accounted for, but as the result of an instinct implanted by the Author of nature. Children are taught by natural instinct to confide in their parents. All the information which we receive concerning external objects and occurrences is matter of trust, of implicit confidence in those who, as we suppose, can

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

have no motive to deceive us. The patient trusts his physician; the subject trusts his governor; all are always trusting each other. In a word, trust is one of the most extensive ingredients in society; it is the very bond of social order; nothing can be more antisocial than the violation of trust. The apostle charges us to "speak every one truth with his neighbour;" assigning as a reason, that "we are members one of another." "Lie not," he says, "one to another;" it is to break the cement of society. No finite mind can calculate the evils that must arise from the habitual violation of our mutual confidence.

Trust supposes our own inferiority to the object in which we repose it. We trust, for instruction or protection, in one whom we regard as superior to ourselves in respect to each; our reliance on him is the measure of our self-distrust. What, then, is it for which the Gentiles trust the Messiah? It is not for any present interest: it is for our eternal destiny; it is that we may escape an evil from which we cannot else escape; that we may attain a good not otherwise to be attained. If salvation is the object in view, it is supposed that, left in our natural condition, we are ruined, and that we can only find help in God by Jesus Christ.

II. We proceed to notice some of those qualifications that justify our trust in any being, and how those qualifications exist in Jesus Christ.

Trust supposes a promise; the evidence of character alone is not sufficient: the greatest benignity and power combined is not the proper object of our trust, without an explicit promise. Three things are required as the basis of our confidence in any being: his voluntary engagement; his probity and goodness; and his ability to fulfil the promised undertaking. Each of these, as we shall find, exists perfect in Jesus Christ.

1. He has entered into a voluntary engagement. He has held himself forth as the object of our trust. He is represented in prophecy as saying, "Behold Me, behold Me, to those that were not called by My name." "I give unto My sheep," He says, "eternal life." "Every one that believeth in Me, I will raise him up at the last day." We are not treading on precarious ground when we invite men to place their trust in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. There is no other name whereby we may be saved; no other foundation of hope than that which is laid in Jesus Christ.

2. His probity and goodness cannot be questioned. In the gospel account of Him there are all the marks of perfect ingenuousness; as when we find Him entreating his hearers to count the cost of becoming his disciples; or when He says, "If it were not so, I would have told you;" as if He had said, "Would I delude you with a false hope?" Nothing could be farther from his mind. He looked upon our race with a divine compassion, and said by the Spirit and the pen of prophecy, "Lo, I come." In

the fulness of time He came, put on our flesh, hid his own glory, toiled, agonized, bled, expired; and all this was voluntary, not necessitated, on his part. Who, then, can doubt his sincerity? He was free to have left such a work alone; but He engaged in it that God might be just and sinners justified; for this He trod the wine-press of wrath, when He looked, and there was none to save! We cannot question his benignity.

3. Nor can we distrust his power, his ability, adequate to the proposed undertaking. Can He who calmed the winds, who walked on the waves, who raised the dead, who raised himself, be supposed insufficient here? He who foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, the sufferings of his people, the spreading of his gospel, the triumph of his cause, must himself be King of kings and Lord of lords. By rising from the dead, he proves that he has all power in earth and heaven; that He is not only the Lamb that was slain, but also the Lion of Judah!

III. Some leading properties of this trust in Jesus Christ yet remain to be pointed out. This is the most important part of the subject that has engaged us, as our happiness in eternity depends on our possession of this trust; and, from indolence or pride, men are extremely exposed to error in this their grand concern. Our trust in Christ, to be valid and saving, must be,

1. A solemn, deliberate act; not the effect of a sudden impulse, but the act of an enlightened mind, the effect of "seeing the Son," recognising in Him those qualities which justify unlimited confidence: "He that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him," is he who "hath everlasting life." You should "know whom you have believed, and be persuaded that He is able to keep that which you have intrusted to Him against his own day." Did you ever know what it was to repair, in some great exigence, to one who was both able and willing to help you? And did you forget your benefactor? No: if you have learned to put your trust in Christ, the very feet of those who led you to such a Friend will be beautiful in your eyes! Place your whole confidence, with the utmost deliberation, in such a Saviour!

2. This is an exclusive trust; it must be centred in Christ alone. "Cursed is he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm!"—Jer., xvii., 5. Trust not in any qualities or works of your own: be assured that, were you not lost without Him, never would He have died to save you! He will never divide his glory with another. His is a merit all his own, with which there is nothing in common in any other element throughout the universe! In Him, be assured, is all your help. It was the ruin of the Jews, that they went about to establish their own righteousness, instead of submitting to the terms of the gospel, while the Gentiles, ignorant of the whole business, found Him whom they sought not.

3. Our trust in the Saviour must be humble and penitential. We must act in the spirit of the Jew who offered the first-fruits;

he set down his basket, and said, "A Syrian, ready to perish, was my father." — Deut., xxvi., 5. We must acknowledge and feel our utter unworthiness, otherwise we contradict our profession. There can be no faith in Christ, but an humble, penitential faith; and yet a faith, at the same time, stable, permanent, based more firmly than the everlasting hills! Their apprehension of the majesty and purity of God does not impair the confidence of dying saints; they rejoice in the remembrance of his holiness, and call on Him as their Father. Humility and confidence dwell together in perfect harmony.

4. Once more: our trust in the Redeemer must be attended with submission to his authority; our faith with the obedience of faith. They are the foremost to fulfil the law of Christ, who place their entire affiance in Christ; constrained by his love, which constrained Him to die for them, they bind his precepts on their hearts. The first effect of his grace is, that they present to Him the homage of their life; deny themselves, that they may follow Him. It is a practical trust, that sets in motion all the springs of action, purifies all the powers and affections; for Jesus Christ, let us remember, saves by his merit those only whom He rules by his authority.

You hope to enjoy his salvation: let me invite you to trust Him thus. He is the bread of life; but you must eat that bread, that you may live: you must be able to say from your heart, "My Lord, and my God!" This is the command, the will, the work of God, comprehensive of all that He requires, that we should believe in the Saviour. This silences the thunders of Sinai, suspends the curses of the law, extracts the sting of death. What a favour, to make that our duty which is our greatest privilege!

LXII.

GROUNDS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE SAVIOUR'S ABILITY.*

2 Timothy, i., 12: *Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, January 27, 1828, on the death of Mrs. Wayte, sister of James Fripp, Esq., of Bristol.]

The Apostle Paul was peculiarly commissioned as a minister of the gospel to the Gentiles. In this service he was subjected to many sufferings; in reference to this he speaks in the text. We have here a strong expression of his confidence in the Saviour:

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

let us consider, first, the nature, and then the grounds of this confidence.

I. Its nature. Some suppose the deposite which the apostle mentions as committed to him, to denote the gospel trust in general; and this view is favoured by the similar expression in the context: "That good thing which was committed to thee, keep; hold fast the form of sound words." But it seems more probable that he refers in the text to the interest of his salvation, the trust of his whole being, his body, soul, and spirit, which he had confidently committed to Christ, as Him who had "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light." In the near view of martyrdom, dissolution, and eternity, his confidence remained unshaken: "I am now," he said, "ready to be offered; I have finished my course; henceforth is reserved for me a crown of glory." This is a trust unfit to be reposed in any created arm. No potentate can hold back his own spirit, much less another's, a moment from death: no angel could undertake such a trust; he would abjure it. Some portion of our interests we commit to others, but never think of committing our whole spirit to a creature. Hence we infer that Jesus Christ is truly God; else it were highly improper, and indeed accursed, thus to trust Him: "Cursed is he that maketh flesh his arm." But to Him Christians have ever confided their souls.

II. The grounds on which the apostle trusts the Saviour. He saw that in his character which warranted such confidence, and he had a conviction of his ability. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." There was some peculiarity in Paul's case, to which we may advert, but which we need not anxiously separate from the general case of Christians.

1. The first ground, peculiar to Paul, is his vision of Christ at Damascus; this penetrated him with reverence and attachment for the glorious person then revealed; his heart was melted like wax, and he cried, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Thenceforth he had no rule but Christ's will, no end but Christ's glory; all the energies of his great spirit were devoted to plant Christianity, and water it with his tears, prayers, and blood; he conceived the largest expectations from Christ, and trusted his spirit to Him whom he had not seen, but in whom he believed.

2. He was confirmed in his trust by his subsequent experience of the favour and power of Christ. His eyes were opened by Ananias at Christ's command. Miraculous powers of great variety were conferred on himself; so that he did, perhaps, even greater wonders than Christ had done. He was inspired to preach with power and boldness: "the power of Christ rested on him." In his soul such a renovation, such a revolution, took place, as only Divine power could have effected. He was purified with humility and enlarged with love; his prospects were extended far beyond time; and all this was the effect of Christ's ascension,

and his gift of the Holy Spirit. "His name, through faith in his name," was the cause: "I can do all through Christ, who strengthens me." The life of Jesus was manifest in his body. Here was a proof of Christ's resurrection; here were pledges and earnests of that mighty power which will subdue all to itself, and change the vile body to be like his glorious body.

In the same manner, Christians now experience pardon, peace, renewal, the elements and preparations of eternal life. They are justified; they have the first-fruits of the Spirit in foretaste of the full harvest. All real Christians have in themselves such evidences as exclude all doubt of the power of Christ to keep what they commit to Him.

3. Jesus Christ had wrought the great salvation, and reconciled it with all the attributes of God. Man was reduced to despair by sin; how should he be restored without a violation of the Divine law? This great difficulty had been removed only by the interposition of Jesus Christ, by his taking our nature, and dying for us. And now, never did the law appear more august than in the cross of Christ! But He who had done this had already done that which was more difficult than to introduce the objects of his love into the mansions of bliss. "If we were reconciled by his death," as Paul argued, "much more shall we be saved by his life." If, from being enemies, we were made sons of God, much more shall we be glorified as sons. The sequel, the top-stone, must crown the preparation. What He has done by merit is a pledge what He can do by power. "He is become the Author of eternal life to them that obey Him."

4. The rank which Jesus Christ holds in heaven assures us that He "is able to keep that which is committed to Him." He is raised, enthroned, has a name far above every name in heaven; angels are his subjects, his servants. He is himself the light of the celestial temple: "no need of the sun, for the Lamb is the light thereof." "All power," He declared, "is given unto Me in heaven and earth." He sent forth influences of a miraculous nature, and said to his apostles, "Go, heal the sick, cast out devils." He now appears as a Priest on his throne, surrounded by multitudes of the redeemed: John fell as dead at the view of his glory! He is the Resurrection and the Life. He proclaims himself the source of life: "I give unto My sheep eternal life;" not only the revealer, but the source. He will not disappoint the hopes which He excited, nor will He send empty away those whom He has assured that "in Him all fulness dwells." Well may they say with Peter, "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

5. As Jesus Christ is the appointed Judge of all, so eternal life is at his disposal in his judicial character. He will say from his throne to those whom He shall place on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world!" Nothing can be more di-

vine than this office. He will welcome all his faithful followers to his eternal feast of love on Mount Sion.

In these sentiments, in this faith, our dear sister lived and died.

LXIII.

INVITATION OF CHRIST TO SINNERS.*

MATTHEW, xi., 28–30: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, July 11, 1830.]

THESE were the words of our blessed Saviour in the days of his flesh, and are recorded for the encouragement of those to whom the invitation applies in every succeeding age; and will administer support to mourners under whatever troubles they may labour. They partake of that spirit and that light which distinguish the teaching of our Saviour from all human instructions. He was prophesied of by those who spoke of Him in ancient time, as a teacher that should bring glad tidings to the meek, that should comfort those that mourn, and that should bind up the broken-hearted. Accordingly, we find that it was to persons of this description, perplexed with the cares and anxieties of life, clouded with a sense of guilt, harassed with apprehensions of future danger, that He addressed himself with the greatest success. While the children of this world, the votaries of its prosperities and its grandeurs, turned away from Him with disdain, the common people heard Him gladly. That religion which will not console in affliction is ill adapted to man. Man is born to sorrow; his days are evil and few: therefore the gospel of Christ is fraught with such consolation as is adapted to support the minds of those that are labouring under whatever calamities it may seem fit to Divine Providence to send upon them.

In considering these words with a view to our present improvement, I shall endeavour to *point out several descriptions of persons to whom this consolatory invitation may be supposed to address itself, and who may be supposed to be within the limits of the application of this impressive promise.*

When our Saviour says, "*Come unto me,*" we are to understand it as figurative language, though it is easily understood, as men are accustomed to *come* to the teacher under whose instructions they place themselves. Our Saviour uses this language to the persons present with Him, to intimate the duty of putting themselves under his guidance, professing his religion, embracing his promises, receiving Him

* Reported in the Pulpit, vol. xv.

under all those characters, and with a view to all those purposes under which He is revealed. It is a short and expressive term for becoming a subject of his religion, and is explained in the subsequent parts of the passage: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And He adds, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." It is not a *local* coming to Christ, which at present is impossible, but a movement of mind and heart unto Him, with a true consent to his doctrine, a hearty and sincere trust in his merits, and such resignation to his guidance as is due to the nature of his character and doctrine.

The *first* class of persons that our Saviour was supposed to have in view, were *such as were laden with the burden of ceremonial obedience.* Though the law of Moses was sufficiently severe in this respect, and though the Jews were as a people that are under a schoolmaster, yet the Pharisees and Scribes of that day were not satisfied with the extent and minuteness of the Mosaic precepts, but superadded a great many other observances of human invention, which they bound upon the consciences of their followers with as much earnestness as the most essential duties of the law. While they themselves neglected the love of God, and justice, and the weightier matters of the law, they put heavy burdens on other men's shoulders which they themselves were not able to bear. They bound upon them the law of God in all its extent; and, in addition to this, ingrafted such refinements upon it as rendered the observance of it more difficult and oppressive. Many were burdensome in the way of expense, others occupied much time, harassed the conscience with perpetual scrupulosity, and kept it in constant disquietude. As they attached the greatest importance to those parts which were not of Divine appointment, men's minds could scarcely ever be at rest, for they could not live a single day without infringing some of them. Our Lord, in contrast to this, says, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." He enjoined upon mankind among the Jews no laws but those which Moses had uttered. He reminded them of the time when these laws were to be superseded by a more benign economy; and, in the mean time, exploded all those which had been added to the law of Moses. His observances were few and simple, neither occupying much time nor incurring much expense. They recommended themselves by their significance and force. There are only two positive institutes in the whole of the Christian dispensation, and the other precepts arise out of the very duties which grow out of our relation to God and our fellow-creatures.

We need not look far to perceive an exemplification of this spirit of imposition in religious observances. The votaries of the Church of Rome are heavily laden in this respect: a yoke of forms and ceremonies is imposed upon them, more strict than the law of God. They are taught to believe that to waste their flesh, and to lacerate it with scourges, is a proper method of expiating transgressions; and their worship itself is so burdened and abstruse, that it becomes a mystery which the people themselves who perform these ceremonies cannot explain or account for.

This is worthy of our serious attention; for we find that the same spirit of presumption, the same disposition to add to the commands of God, which induced the Scribes and Pharisees, urges men now to add most materially and essentially to the simple precepts of the gospel. Let it not be thought this was unworthy the attention of the Saviour. He was full of compassion to mankind, and looked, no doubt, with sincere pity on the state of those who were thus groaning under the burden of human ceremonies.

In the *next* place, another class may be supposed to be more in view, *such as are oppressed and burdened with a sense of guilt.* In every assembly there are persons of this description; and it is impossible for persons to live under the light of the Christian economy without being visited with an uneasiness of this nature. The conscience is too active to be lulled asleep: at some time or other it will speak, and set in order the sins of the guilty before them, and bring the charge home to the breast of the offender, saying, in the language of Nathan, "Thou art the man." The Saviour had, no doubt, many such in his presence; and he who knew the heart, was well acquainted with all the agitations each sustained. With language unutterably compassionate he invited them to Him: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden."

The wrath of God is so superior to all other evils, that the more we reflect upon it, the more we shall fear it. Many calamities are overrated, and appear more formidable at first than when we have leisure to take them in all their bearings. But the wrath of God is not of this nature. To incur the displeasure of our Maker is an evil, that the more we contemplate it, the more we shall have occasion to fear and dread. It is wrath to come, wrath that extends throughout eternity. It embraces the curse of God, and is connected with that pit of destruction where the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched. Whoever is conscious of his having entitled himself to the sentence of condemnation hereafter, which all sinners are liable to, that person is exposed to a danger greater, incomparably, than his utmost fears can measure. And where shall he find relief? Where is there any hope of pardon resulting from the character of God, or from the condition of the sinner? The law is holy, and just, and good: it is therefore consistent with the lawgiver to put it into execution. There is no relief, then, to be found in his character, viewed abstractedly from the light of Divine revelation. But when we come to Christ, there we find hope arising even in the valley, there we find an avenue by which we may enter the presence of God with acceptance. He is the way to the Father, having removed all the obstructions that lay in the way of justice. He has brought in everlasting righteousness, in his endurance of the penalty, in his performance of the obedience due to the law. In his sacrifice we see an adequate provision made, whereby God can be just, and yet the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus. Here is the true foundation of peace which God himself has laid. It is not presumption, therefore, to rest upon it: for in resting our weary souls on the promises of Christ, we

follow the dictates of his holy teaching, we obey the great command of his gospel, which is, that we should "believe on Him whom God hath sent, for Him hath God the Father sealed."

Are there any now in the presence of God thus oppressed with the sense of guilt? Let them not look for consolation in themselves, nor in any contrast or comparison they may draw between their own character and the character of others; but let them look to the promise of God—to the atoning sacrifice of the Son. Let them behold Him dying for their sins—rising for their justification—pleading the efficacy of his merits on behalf of sinners. For "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The rest which those have experienced that have thus fled for refuge to the hope set before them, is unspeakably sweet and precious—it is peace which passeth understanding. The conscience is at once pacified and purified: it speaks nothing but peace. The justice of God, and the holiness of God, are clearly exhibited in this Divine provision; nor were they ever so much displayed in pardoning sin on the ground of sacrifice, as in that which was rendered by the Divine person in our nature. The pardoned sinner may retain all his consolation and confidence in God, while he contemplates in the Divine light the purity of his holiness, and the inflexible severity of his justice.

In the *third* place, we may suppose our Saviour had in view *those who, not oppressed with any particular charge of guilt, were yet attempting to establish their peace with God, and were labouring to erect an edifice of rightcousness out of their own performances.* This was the most ancient way of justification, and it is that to which man adheres in his fallen state. It was only adapted to that condition of being in which man came out of the hands of his Maker. But man in his fallen state is still addicted to that method of seeking his acceptance with God, and overlooks the gospel, which teaches him that by the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified. There are many under the influence of false teaching, who are thus going about to establish their own righteousness; and though they will not pretend strictly that they merit eternal life by virtue of their good works, yet the moral quality of these is the basis of their hope: it is the virtue of their characters on which they lay stress for their acceptance with God. Though the conscience of persons in this situation may not be troubled by any very violent commotion, yet it cannot be in a state of rest; they must be labouring in a fire that will consume the workers. They are attempting to establish their peace with a just and holy Being, by virtue of works which are preceded by sin, and are accompanied by moral imperfections. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Unfailing obedience to the law of God was never exhibited by man. "There is none righteous, no, not one." Were a man's conduct to become ever so perfect, he can make no compensation to the injured rights of the Divine government, nor cancel any of the debt incurred by his past transgressions. The innocence of a person

in future, who has been guilty of some transgression, never furnishes in any human court of judicature a justification for his past conduct; nor will it place him in the situation he occupied before. If we had more reverence for God, and more reverence for his laws, we should never imagine that the poor, scanty obedience of a sinful worm, can make any expiation for past offences. The law of God is clear and express in this respect. "Cursed is every one who continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them." While there is *any* sin, there is no possibility of acceptance. The law can only make known sin, and charge it upon the conscience; but it never can remove the least portion of criminality. It is not intended that the law of God shall answer any other purpose than to convince the conscience of sin, and then to present in a clear view the character of God, and the requisitions of his authority, and thereby allure us into a sense of his love and mercy. But if we look to it for justification, we shall always be in a state of turmoil and trouble. Let this class of persons never expect to dispose of the punishment due to their sins by virtue of their present obedience. Let them relinquish all expectation of acceptance upon the ground of their own observance. Confess your sins—forsake them—renounce them—lay hold of the great atonement; and then no transgression shall arise to condemn you in the hour of death, nor in the day of judgment. Here is the atoning sacrifice—here is the virtue of expiation—here is that quality that reconciles the soul to the Divine Being — here, in the atonement of the Redeemer, is sufficient merit to compensate for your want of merit; all your wants will be lost sight of in the contemplation of the excellence of HIM, in whom, and for whose sake alone, guilty sinners are accepted.

This is a doctrine the efficacy of which has been experienced in every age of the Church, and was the grand engine which subverted the papal hierarchy. It is so admirably adapted to glorify God, and to provide for the exigences of man, that it bears upon it all the impress of the Divine character. It is one of the deep things of God whereby He reconciles the world unto himself. How wonderful is the conjunction of the Divine attributes in this glorious work! It glorifies God in his holiness and justice at the moment He is dispensing pardon to the most unworthy, who, though guilty, are penitent and believing: for God is just while He justifies every one that believeth in Jesus.

In the *next* place, our Saviour may be supposed to address *those who were overwhelmed with worldly calamities—the victims of worldly sorrow.* The world has its martyrs as well as religion; and were the records of past ages to be laid before us, they would make a much more numerous appearance than the slaughtered followers of the Lamb. There are thousands in every age who perish in the pursuit of the pleasures of the world; instances of which excite no surprise, they are so frequent. If godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation which needeth not to be repented of, it is no less true that worldly sorrow worketh death. At one time some single sudden

stroke of calamity lays prostrate the object of our affection which was nourished in the contemplation of it. In another instance, hope and anticipation are levelled by the arrow of death, or suffered to wither by such an accumulation of vice and folly, that the recollection of it is only accompanied by shame and sorrow. In such a situation, and under such circumstances, expectation of future joy will never vegetate, unless a visitation of grace takes place. The mourners refuse to be comforted, and look on the world as the sepulchre of all their hopes. If they are led to come to Christ, and to look to Him for consolation, hope, ingrafted on a new stock, flourishes again, blooms in lovely verdure, and shoots to immortality—to say nothing of that glory which is its most consummate production. Here is room for consolation for the most desolate of these mourners. It invites the soul to look to a new heaven and to a new earth; to wait for a recompense above—not in the world and the things of the world, which pass away; and to take possession of unclouded felicity in the presence of God and of his angels. It substitutes blessings fraught with immortality for those which are doomed to decay. The promises of the gospel are big with immortal hope, and breathe immortal vigour; and thousands, who, having mourned over the loss of human prospects, have turned their attention to these new channels, have found themselves animated with fresh ardour, and have gone forward nerved with fresh strength, till they have at length appeared before God in Zion. As Jesus Christ was the greatest mourner, He was also the greatest conqueror; and He shows us the way to follow Him. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. All the trials of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be hereafter. Come unto Christ—embrace his religion—rely upon his promises—enter the presence of God as unto a father reconciled to you—and then a new hope will spring up in your breast—new passions will be excited, and new desires will awaken within you. Let those that mourn in this way under the stroke of human calamity learn to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and turn their hope to God, and Christ, and heaven.

Our Saviour may be supposed, *farther*, to have in view *those that are engaged in an uncertain, restless, and unsuccessful pursuit after felicity in the present state—who are entirely bound with the chains of this present world—still hoping that some new event will take place which will realize their wishes, and enable them to attain that after which they have been so long toiling.* These delusions amuse the mind for a time, but at length, having been disappointed so often, the vanities of the world, from which the mind finally expected to draw its happiness, appears in their real shapes, and stand detected; and yet, for want of a better pursuit, for want of the showing of higher objects, they still continue to chain the attention, and to be the only object pursued, without affording any good ground for the expectation of that felicity which would seem to attend the different stages of it. There is a passage in Lord Chesterfield which, were I to read it to you, would convince you of the truth of these remarks—a passage the most expressive on

the point that was ever recorded out of Divine revelation. No man appears to have had so deep a conviction as Lord Chesterfield had that all in this world was vanity and vexation of spirit; and yet he closes the subject with a determination to continue in the same line of conduct, and not to indulge any new, any higher and religious hope.

If there are any now in the presence of God that are weary of human pleasure, that have tasted it in all its variety; if there are any here who are still pursuing after happiness in the world, let them come to Christ, and they will find rest for their souls. Let such be persuaded that there is another source of happiness, which they may have in Christ. Let them remember that He has entered into the heavenly state, possessed of all the resources of immortal life, and is ready to crown the perseverance of his followers by making them partakers of it. Let them believe He is a true witness when He says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life." Let them believe that He is *not* the author of the greatest delusion that ever mocked the hope of man. Let them believe that He will come again, and take them unto himself. Let them believe that He prayed with effect to his Father, "Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Come, then, to Jesus Christ, if such be your state; renounce that world which you discover to be an impostor; give up all those hopes which are thus ill-directed; consult the immortality of your nature, the tendency of your never-dying spirit; provide something that shall survive the revolutions of time; seek a spiritual nature, a spiritual inheritance that fadeth not away; consecrate your powers and affections to the love and service of God, and to the spread of the knowledge of Christ crucified. Begin with the lessons of humility and repentance, and join with them the highest ardour of confidence in the mercy of God; and proclaim to all penitent believers the savour of that liberty with which the Son of God makes his people free.

In the *last* place, Jesus Christ may be supposed to have in view *those that are heavy laden by speculative pursuits in matters of religion; and He invites such to seek a solution of their doubts by a reception of his doctrine.* There may be some present who are wearied with anxious pursuits after speculative truth, who have passed from doubt to doubt, and from disputation to disputation, and still can only say that they are filled with confusion and conjecture, and have arrived at no safe conclusion. If, while placing our eyes on the light of Divine revelation, we do not rest satisfied therewith, but surround ourselves with sparks of our own kindling, such must be the case. We can never penetrate the deep things of God, or perceive beyond this scene of darkness, unless we are taught by Him who sent his Son to be "the light of the world." But when you come to Christ and embrace his gospel, all the difficulties are removed out of the way; you see with a clear light—you perceive harmony and regularity where you saw confusion and discord. In meditating on the truths of the gospel, you see a sublimity in their tendency, and a holy influence to result from them, which marks them as coming from the fountain of all

good. You attain a confidence of mind and a certainty of hope, which nothing but revelation could ever inspire. Possessed of this confidence and endowed with the same hope, the martyrs had a full assurance of faith, which enabled them to know in whom they believed. This holy confidence, this assurance that you are not deceived, awaits each of you if you embrace the gospel, if you lay hold of the cross, and pray the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to have mercy upon you, to enable you to learn his lessons, and to take his yoke upon you. You see clearly afar off, but the light you now possess shall be increased, till it terminates in the fulness of the celestial vision.

Recollect that the yoke of Christ is the only yoke that is easy; every other yoke will be found to be heavy. There is a peace and tranquillity attending the breast of a religious man, which no other breast contains. And they never tasted the true peace, which is sweet and which is abiding, till they became acquainted with Christ, the Prince of Peace; they never tasted true pleasure, they never learned comfort in the midst of sorrow, they were never armed with resolution in the prospect of death and eternity, till they acquainted themselves with Him who is "the Truth and the Life." Come, then, to Him; bear his burden; learn the lessons of his doctrine; receive his promises; investigate the evidences of his religion; if you think you find it faulty and reject it, you reject it at your peril; you deprive yourself of the resources of the Divine love; you repel your Saviour; you refuse your remedy; you are in love with everlasting ruin; for it is written, "All they that hate me love death."

LXIV.

ENDS PROPOSED IN THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.*

LUKE, XXIV., 26: *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, March 11, 1830, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

YOU well remember the circumstances of the interview which occasioned these words. If the disciples addressed had studied the prophecies with that attention and that impartiality which they deserved, never could they have been cast into despair by the death of Christ; and this He implied when He put the question to them, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" He looks back, you observe, upon his recent sufferings with perfect complacency and approbation; He justifies the conduct of his Father, in their appointment, as worthy of the Divine character: his words imply that his sufferings were the effect of design; a part of the whole counsel of God.

I shall point out a few of the reasons for which it was necessary

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

that Christ should have suffered; and also some of the leading effects, and beneficial consequences, of his death.

1. It was requisite that Christ should suffer, in order that He might verify his own predictions. It is not necessary that every witness of truth should seal it with his death: some have died in defence of error. But, circumstanced as Christ was, it was necessary that He should suffer. He had often and distinctly predicted his sufferings to his disciples. Hence He had reason to be surprised at their incredulity. He had assured them that He came into the world for this purpose; He had looked forward to it with eager desire: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" His sufferings ought, therefore, to have established their faith, instead of shaking it. He is the only teacher that ever rested the truth of his system upon his death and resurrection. This would have been the utmost folly, unless He had been certain of God's interposing in his vindication; as nothing but infamy could otherwise have covered both himself and his followers. He had gone so far as to announce the very manner of his death: "I must be lifted up from the earth;" and the precise interval between his death and resurrection: "on the third day I will rise again:" circumstances which, without the Divine interposition, must have failed. These predictions, in union with other things, tend to prove the reality of his resurrection.

2. A succession of prophets had foretold his sufferings. Moses had foretold them, in those sacrifices which prefigured his: the priesthood was a type of his intercession in heaven; Isaac represented the beloved Son offered by his Father; the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which has none of the obscurity of a prophecy, resembles an evangelist's account of the sufferings of Christ; it paints them with the utmost distinctness, and entitles Isaiah to be called the evangelical prophet; the twenty-second Psalm is a minute picture of a death by crucifixion; Christ is the substance of the description, to whom alone, in many points, it applies.

Thus the death of Christ was necesary to fulfil the Scripture: "How else could the Scripture be fulfilled?" But, besides this, the most beneficial consequences were involved in the sufferings and death of Christ, which leads me to observe,

3. That the salvation of mankind depended on his death, and could not have been effected without it. Divine wisdom economizes the means which it employs; it never sets a machinery at work more expensive than that which the case requires. If there had been any other way to save sinners, God, we may be sure, would have spared his Son: such a costly mode of mercy would have been dispensed with. But the pardon of sin could be effected only thus: it is always represented as the effect of his death. "We have redemption through his blood, even the remission of sins: his blood cleanseth us from all sin." God thus confirming that great maxim of his moral government, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." The sacrifices of animals, which were shadows of his, could never take away

sin: but his, which was the substance of those shadows, could. Hence the redeemed in heaven ascribe their salvation to Him that washed them from their sins in his own blood; they appear as those who have "washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb;" and "therefore," it is added, "they stand before the throne of God." The Apostle Paul, who had been most attached to the law, declares that men could not be justified by its works: once, indeed, he had rested in it; but as soon as Christ had come, and was made known, he concentrated his whole mind on Him, as the basis of his justification: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." All the gifts of God in grace are so many streams flowing from this fountain, the sacrifice and intercession of Christ: pardon, sanctification, adoption, the comforts of the Spirit, and eternal glory, all are to be traced back to this origin. With all these things present to his view, how well might he say, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" So dead, so lost was man, that no other provision could suffice for his recovery.

4. The full display of the glorious character of God required that Christ should suffer. God can have no higher end, in all his operations *extrâ*, out of himself, than this, the manifestation of himself. The revelation of the Divine excellence is the cause of all the perfection, beauty, and happiness of all pure and intelligent beings. Now we have reason to believe, from the Scriptures, that the character of "the Blessed and Only Potentate" is more fully displayed in the sacrifice of Christ than in any of his other works. Here we behold his purity, as the moral Governor; here his mercy, as the Father of his creatures. Never shall we know which most to admire, as here displayed, judgment or mercy, the awful or the lovely! In other cases we discover these perfections separate and in parts: in the fate of the fallen angels, we see the wrath of God on sin. Here is an intermingled display of holiness and compassion; and it is the brightest, the most intense display of both that ever can be given. The eternal Father hides his face from his beloved Son, consumes his body and his spirit, on account of the sin which He bore as a sacrifice. The condign punishment of the whole world would not have presented so awful a spectacle of holiness and justice! This, at the same time, is the greatest proof of Divine love: had all the world been pardoned by an absolute grant of mercy, so great a proof of God's love to the world had not been given as this! The medium through which the pardon flows is a greater gift than the pardon itself! "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son!" This is the unspeakable gift of his love! In this view we may well say, "Ought not Christ to have suffered?"

5. A farther end, a subordinate one, I confess, was that Christ, in suffering, might give us an example of holiness and virtue. If this is not the first end of his death, yet it is one of which we ought never to lose sight. "Christ suffered, leaving us an example." He knew that his followers would have, in addition to the common experience of man, sorrows and sufferings peculiarly their own: He knew the conflict

which they would have to sustain in that age of persecution: He therefore showed them the way: and thus He cheered their minds; after such an example as his, no sort of suffering should appear too bitter: they should "overcome through the blood of the Lamb." Whatever we may suffer, He has suffered all before us, either literally or virtually: reproach, violence, the strife of tongues, the most excruciating pain, the desertion of friends, the desertion of God's presence in the soul; in a word, the cross. It was necessary, as an example, that He should be an afflicted, a dying, an agonizing Saviour.

6. And, once more, the death of Christ was necessary, in order to attain the benefits which it has imparted to the higher order of beings. As this is a view with which we are not immediately concerned, there is little revealed in Scripture; and yet there are a few glimpses given us, in regard to the universal influence of the sacrifice of Christ on the happiness of heavenly beings. From the moment of his death, He became the Judge and Lord of all: the angels of heaven were placed under his authority; Satan and his angels were reserved for his tribunal. Whenever there is a new arrangement of Providence, there is a beneficial end proposed: some great benefit must, therefore, have resulted from the commission of all power in heaven and earth into the hands of Christ. It is an astonishing idea, that angels should be subordinate to a crucified man! We hear of elect angels; elect in Christ: this implies, as there is reason to believe, their confirmation in their present state of purity and bliss, in consequence of the redemption effected by Christ: their felicity is no longer, as before, placed in their own hands, no longer liable to be lost, like that of the fallen angels. Hence it is not surprising that they join in the new song of praise to the Lamb, and cast their crowns at his feet. The death of Christ is a sacrifice of a sweet savour, that diffuses a fragrance over the universe! it affords a stability to the happiness of all holy beings. All are gathered together in Him as in their Head; united to each other and to God. We have the greatest reason, then, to rejoice with Him, in the review of his death, and to say, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" We have reason to remember the wormwood, the gall, and the agony, with joy; because such benefits as these are derived from those sufferings; because they issue in glory to God, salvation for sinners, an example to those who suffer, an increase and confirmation of happiness to all the servants of God!

What gratitude is due from us, my brethren, to this dear Saviour! What shall we render to Him for all that He has suffered, in order that He might procure such benefits for us! What can be so shocking as that we should alienate ourselves from Him who bought us with his blood, lifted us up from the abyss of despair, beautified us with salvation, made us to sit with himself in heavenly places! By what strict and tender ties are we bound to Him! especially when the faculties which we give to Him are dignified; and we receive ourselves back, as it were, purified and ennobled! If we should have looked with horror upon Lazarus whom He once raised from the dead,

had Lazarus lifted up his hand against his Benefactor, with what horror ought we to look upon whatever tends to "crucify Christ afresh, and put Him to open shame!" whatever tends to trample his blood under foot, and pour contempt upon his sufferings! Instead of this, it should be our constant desire to gratify and honour Him; the uppermost feeling in our hearts should be, "What can I do for Christ? How shall I make it appear that I have been with Him, that I have learned of Him?" If we are influenced by this spirit, He will come and make his abode with us; He will manifest himself to us. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Let every saint esteem all beside but loss, in comparison with the possession of his love! Let us live on Him as the bread of life, and live to Him as the Lord of conscience. Let his love be the commanding principle in all our hearts.*

LXV.

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS.†

1 CORINTHIANS, i., 18: *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

[Preached at the Anniversary of the Baptist Missionary Society, at Oxford, October 1, 1817.]

THE apostle in this chapter informs us what was the chief matter and design of his ministry; he denominates it by that which constitutes its principal part, which was the preaching of the cross. I need not remind you that by this expression he means preaching the gospel; but we learn from it, that the cross of Christ is a fact of so much moment as to give its designation to the whole of the apostolical ministry and the Christian economy. Now, when a particular part of a subject is selected for the purpose of giving an appellation to the whole, it is manifest it must not only be a part, but the principal part, a part so essential that every thing belonging to it must bear towards it an intimate relation. This is the rank, this is the department, occupied by the doctrine or word of "the cross," which the apostle here tells us, though foolishness to them that perish, is to all that are saved the power of God.

* The Rev. Joseph Hughes, M.A., the highly-esteemed [originator and] secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, offered the prayer before this exquisite sermon. It was the last which he heard from his early and admired friend. Within less than a year he was called to deliver, from the same pulpit, the funeral discourse over its departed ornament. Of him Mr. Hall remarked, on the present occasion, "It was good for mankind that such a man was born." Describing Mr. Hall as a preacher, Mr. Hughes, with a graphic fidelity, observes, "The compass of his voice was small, but the character of his sentiments, their lucid order, his rich and appropriate expressions, the melody of his tones, the rapidity of his utterance, and the fire of his eyes, combined as they all were with dignity, earnestness, and pathos, drew from our lips and from our hearts the testimony which none controverted, 'This is genius, this is wisdom, this is eloquence indeed!'"—GRINFIELD.

† From the notes of W. B. Gurney, Esq.

The cross, you know, was the instrument of our Saviour's death, and as such, by a usual figure, it is placed for the death of Christ itself. But when Paul speaks here of the death of Christ under the term cross, we are not, I apprehend, to confine our attention to the mere fact of his dying; we are to take the death of Christ, when spoken of in Scripture, as including the whole of the doctrine connected with that fact, that is, the doctrine of the atonement. Under this phrase is comprehended all that the New Testament teaches us respecting the dignity of his person, the nature of his death as a vicarious sacrifice, and the great effects and blessings which are to result from it in all succeeding ages; an adequate idea of the atonement of Christ in all its branches, in what it presupposes, and what it secures, is to be considered as included in this representation. The preaching of this cross, the apostle says, was of such importance as to be the power of God. But here we must distinguish between the cross itself and the preaching of it. The cross itself was not the power of God; it existed in an evil world; it operated for far superior, or at least for sublimer purposes. The immediate design of this was to satisfy the justice of God by the value of that blood which was shed, and the dignity of that obedience which was rendered. It operated towards God, though we cannot say upon him in the strict sense of the word, yet as the great consideration upon which, morally considered, he proceeded in affording mercy and salvation to sinful men, so as to render such a manifestation consistent with the essential purity of his character and the majesty of his government. When it is said, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," the term, you are aware, is to be taken in a reciprocal sense, as including, in the first place, the providing an expedient, or moral medium, by which he could show himself propitious; and, by the display and annunciation of these glad tidings, to produce a reconciled state of that mind which was carnal and enmity against God. The cross of Christ, or the atonement, is to be considered as being the basis on which the dispensation of the gospel was founded—on which all its promises rest; it is, speaking in the language of Scripture, "Christ our redemption"—that medium through which the Governor of the world acted in making the grant of pardon to all who repent and turn to God through his Son.

But the preaching of this cross, the apostle says, is "the power of God." It is, in its place and order, as necessary as the cross itself; it brings the creature into contact with this great benefit; it applies the purchase of the Redeemer's blood to all believers. As the cross removed all moral obstructions, this removes the natural obstructions arising from a carnal mind, slaying the enmity, and binding the creature with the eternal Creator in ties of eternal amity. When it is said, "it is the power of God," we are to understand it to be an instrument of the Divine power—the means by which the Divine Being subdues the minds of men,

through this medium, to himself, and makes them the proper subjects of his eternal regard; they are actually saved by him: and, as every instrument implies an agent, we are not to lose sight of the efficacy of the Divine Spirit, which is, throughout the Scriptures, represented as necessary to render the preaching of the cross itself, however valuable, efficacious. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God only giveth the increase." But, if it be an instrument of Divine power, it must be adapted to the purpose for which it is employed; it must be the fittest instrument, and must contain all properties in it which can render it fit that Infinite Wisdom should select it for the purpose of accomplishing thereby the purposes of his power and of his goodness. It is the chosen, and select, and, in an important sense, the only power of God, as the apostle reminds us in the context: "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect;" implying that the cross of Christ was the great means which, while it rendered effectual the preaching of the apostles, destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent; it is this whereby God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world.

Let us, then, briefly consider in what respects the cross of Christ, or the preaching of the cross, more properly—the preaching of reconciliation through the cross of Christ—is an instrument actually employed for the purpose of human salvation; and the fitness and propriety of this instrument, with respect to the use made of it by the apostle and by his associates in the ministry of the gospel. It is too manifest to be for a moment doubted or denied. The apostle, in this very passage, establishes it, by styling the gospel the preaching of the cross. He elsewhere tells us, in the very next chapter, that he is determined to know nothing among them but "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ crucified, he declares in the passage before us, to be "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." He never seems to have lost sight of this doctrine; and whatever he taught besides was either subservient to it, or the result of it; it was either derived from it by necessary consequence, or it was communicated to man for the purpose of enforcing it. The death of the Redeemer is essential to justification in the Divine sight. It occupied the place of a centre in their ministry, from which every ray in their ministry emanated. You have seen the spirit with which Peter entered on his ministry; in his reference to it in his discourse to Cornelius, he at once, without preface, enters upon this doctrine: "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; he is Lord of all." You can scarcely read a passage of the New Testament, not even the practical parts of it, in which the attention is not directed to this subject; the doctrinal parts of it refer to what that presupposes,

and the practical parts are for the most part grounded upon it; and they are all enforced by the motives which are supplied by this great truth.

In the first place, in considering the fitness of the preaching of the cross as the instrument of salvation, we would observe, that it is, above every thing else, calculated to produce conviction, conviction of sin. The knowledge of sin, indeed, is by the law; it is the law which reveals the will of the Divine Being, and prescribes the duty that will commands; it is the law which establishes the penalty which enforces obedience; for the matter of your duty it is necessary to have recourse to the law of God, by which we do not mean so much the Ten Commandments separately taken, as the whole preceptive part of the Old and New Testaments. Not only no part of our duty with respect to the first table, the instruction that communicates, or the obligation to our duty to God, is in the slightest degree superseded by the cross of Christ; but, supposing the law of God to be made known to men, partly by the light of conscience, and partly by the express dictates of Divine revelation, the impressing it upon the mind, so as to produce a deep conviction of sin, is more effected by the preaching of the cross than by any other doctrine whatever; and its importance in this respect must be very manifest to every one who reflects on what passes in the world. How difficult to bring men to a conviction of sin! A great part of mankind have agreed to explode the term, and to introduce vice instead of it, referring to that conduct which has a baleful effect on society in general. They are sufficiently alive to the offences against society, and frequently very zealous in the promulgation of penal laws for their prevention; but they do not look at it in its whole; it is seldom that they advert to vice itself considered as sin against God; it is seldom that they attach any weight to that expression of the Psalmist, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." They very faintly recognise the relation which sin has to God as an offence and contradiction to his will, a presumptuous attempt to shake off his authority. But the cross of Christ is calculated immediately to strike at the root of this prejudice; it takes cognizance of sin, its presupposed existence, and its guilt, as consisting chiefly in its contradiction to the Divine character, and the injury the laws of God are likely to sustain from it. When Divine justice stretches forth its sword, and smites the man who is his fellow, the low and degraded ideas of the men of the world are completely lost sight of; in contemplating the doctrine of the cross, it appears completely to disperse them, and leaves nothing to be contemplated but the conscience of the sinner, and the stern voice of justice requiring compensation.

Again, the cross of Christ exhibits, to a much greater extent than you can possibly otherwise conceive, the magnitude of human transgression. When we measure it by the greatness of the sacrifice necessary to make atonement for it, how do our

ideas of the strictness and purity of the Divine justice rise in our view! How awful does that justice appear which the wisdom of God displays, whose office it is to balance the Divine perfections, that nothing should be accepted as a sacrifice but the blood of his own Son, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person! Who would not be guilty of impiety in supposing that the Divine Being would be prodigal of that blood, and would expose him to degradation which was not necessary to the object? But when we read that "it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," we cannot help estimating the greatness of the danger by the extraordinary means to avert it; the greatness of that wound which sin had inflicted on human nature, by the qualities of that balm which is found only in the blood of the Saviour. No abstract contemplation of the nature of sin as compared with the law of God, no abstract considerations of the justice and purity of the Divine Being, would have given us any thing like that deep impression of the evil of sin, of the great breach rebellion had made in the government of God, of the critical and awful exigency of the case, as the plainest Christian is capable of receiving in the spectacle of his own Son crucified for us. When conscience is alarmed, and when its sacred voice enforces the dictates of the Divine law, and pronounces sentence of condemnation, it will never reach to that extent of the evil of sin as springs from the contemplation of the cross of Christ. It is true, the denunciations of the Divine law are extremely awful. We cannot contemplate the curse the Divine Being has denounced against transgressors, and remember it is the curse of God, without feeling our minds affected; but we shall enter more deeply into the spirit of those passages, and have a greater practical impression of the wrath to come, when we consider that no sacrifice was found sufficient to lay a foundation for deliverance from it, but in the propitiation of the eternal Son. Hence you find, that in the whole course of the Christian life, those whose minds have been deeply imbued by the cross of Christ have had a greater reverence of the Divine majesty, and a greater fear of God as a just legislator, than when this doctrine is not announced. I remember Mr. Brainerd, in the account he gives of his mission among the Indians, remarks that he never found his hearers so much dismayed as when he was, not denouncing the terrors of Divine justice, but displaying the riches of Divine grace in the death of the Redeemer. Those who had reason to believe that they had not laid hold of salvation by the Redeemer, had such a conception of the difference between the lost and the saved, when measured by that standard, that they seemed to be oppressed and sunk into despair almost by the annunciation of the glad tidings.

In the second place, the preaching of the cross is the power

of God to salvation, inasmuch as it is that doctrine alone which lays a firm and solid foundation for peace of conscience, for peace of conscience in a man awakened to a sense of his extreme danger. The great use of conviction of sin is to prepare the mind for the reception of mercy; it is the harrow that turns up the fallow ground, and alone fits it to receive the good seed. If it terminated merely in despondency, or any of those efforts which the anxiety of the human conscience might produce, and did not lead the man to depend on the promise of the Divine pardon, it would be all unavailing. But while the cross of Christ is the most calculated to produce serious alarm, and to excite men to flee from the wrath to come, it is the most adapted to give them true peace in believing. We are informed by St. Paul, that the blood of Christ has this effect in a far more perfect manner than the sacrifices of the law had in the removal of outward pollutions: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living and true God?" It is the blood of Christ that purges the conscience, and the design is that we may serve the living and true God; but we cannot serve God until the conscience is first purged; as the ceremonial disqualifications must be removed from the Jews before they could approach the Divine Being, so a hope of Divine favour and mercy must be felt before we can devote ourselves to the service of the great Supreme. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts us, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having a High-Priest over the house of God, let us draw near." And the way in which we are to draw near is "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." It is the blood of Christ that takes away that condemning sense of the law, that horror arising from a sense of guilt, without the removal of which we can take no steady complacency in the character of God; for, however lovely the Divine Being may be in himself, we cannot take any steady complacency in a character which appears to be our inflexible and determined enemy. It is necessary that the conscience should be in some degree pacified, before a cheerful obedience is rendered, and this only the cross of Christ inspires. Men attempt, in the first instance, to seek peace in other quarters; they endeavour to reform what is amiss; they subject themselves to stricter regulations; they multiply the rules of watchfulness, and of temperance and sobriety; they subject themselves, particularly in certain countries, to great severities; but still the sense of guilt returns, and all with which they attempt to cover themselves, and all the shreds by which they endeavour to conceal themselves, will not avail: they have nothing

to shut out the surges of Divine wrath; the bed is too short for them to stretch themselves upon it. They then have recourse to resolutions of future time, hoping they shall be able to make some atonement by a more correct deportment; but, if the law comes, in its purity and extent, they find all this is vain; that it demands nothing short of perfect obedience; that the penalty has been incurred; that the wrath of God has been excited; that they are already in condemnation; that the sentence has already passed; that they are already condemned, and that they are only waiting, if the Divine proceedings go on in their usual course, for the season of retribution; that they are shut up, they cannot escape. But no sooner are they enabled, in consequence of the despair of any other remedy, and as they find no other resource, to look to the blood of Christ, as cleansing from all sin, than there they find a solid ground of hope; there the conflict is at an end; and they see that they have nothing to do but humbly to receive reconciliation. Peace with God has been made, justice has been satisfied, and only waits to see the sinner confessing his sins over the head of that victim, and asking for mercy in that name.

This relief which the conscience receives is a sound and perfect cure; it has a healing effect upon the conscience, not slightly healing so as to break out again, but it goes to the root of the matter; for the sinner can fetch no reasons for sorrow from the law of God but what are sufficiently answered in the cross of Christ. He can look at death in all its solemnities; he can see himself weighed in the scales of Divine justice, and found wanting; he can see the balance turns against him; he can see his sins great, and ready to destroy him. But when he contemplates this, instead of his knees smiting against each other, like Belshazzar's, he can say, "Who is he that layeth any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." He is more than conqueror in his pleading against the accusations of Satan and all the legal consequences of his conduct; he is more than conqueror through Him that loved him. He is under no necessity, in order to maintain this peace, to have recourse to any sophistical representations or diminutions of the justice or purity of the Divine nature. He has no necessity to form an advantageous comparison of himself with others. Though he were emphatically a sinner, and laden with the iniquities of the whole human race, he perceives in the sacrifice of Christ more than an adequate compensation for all his offences; the law is dignified, and made eternally honourable. And nothing, my dear brethren, besides this, will suffice to give peace to a conscience which is affected with a sense of guilt; for persons under those circumstances conceive their sins have peculiar aggravations, that there is a peculiarity in their character with which no others have been acquainted. Every one under

these circumstances is induced to place himself on the lowest scale; and if the declarations of the mercy of God were not in the most general terms—if every one, however guilty, were not invited to come, a man under this sense of guilt must be the subject of eternal despair. It is here, my dear brethren, that the sinner is enabled to examine the claims of Divine justice, and the provisions of Divine mercy; and when he puts them by the side of each other, his sins, though they were as scarlet, appear all at once to lose their dye; his convictions are buried in the depth of the sea; and he can smite on his heart, while he applies that balm to his conscience, that no one who believes in Christ shall come into condemnation. He can condemn himself, while he knows he shall not be condemned; he appeals from the tribunal of justice to mercy, and a particular reliance on Jesus Christ is all that is demanded at his hand; and his feelings now subside into adoring love and delightful reliance on God. That which was before his terror now becomes his joy, and he can give thanks even at the remembrance of the holiness of God. This is a sure foundation; it is the foundation God himself has laid; He brought it forward from the counsels of eternity; it was announced by the prophets, but it is revealed more perfectly by Jesus Christ himself. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." Thus the penitent believer is erect, self-assured; he stands firm upon the foundation prepared for him; rests upon the merit and atonement of another; his weakness is made strong, but not by any strength of his own. Having the hand of faith, and, though weak in himself, and shaken with every wind, he feels himself to partake of its stability; he stands upon the rock of eternal ages.

In the third place, the preaching of the cross is the power of God, because it is calculated in the highest degree to enforce all the motives to Christian virtue and obedience. It lends its aid and assistance to the performance of every duty, and tends to suggest motives peculiar to itself to the performance of every part of the preceptive will of God. Reconciliation to God is subservient to the sinner's approach to God, to the coming near to Him in religious exercises and obedience. We are redeemed to God; if we are purged from dead works, it is that we may serve the living and true God. Now the same doctrine which encourages our approach to God, strengthens us in the performance of duty; it strengthens us all our way till we reach to our Father and our God. With respect to those duties which have the Divine Being for their immediate object, it is obvious that, though it does not include those duties by any immediate authority; that though it does not make that our duty which was not our duty before; though it makes no difference in our duty to love God with all our heart and all our strength, every one must perceive how it is calculated to enforce that principle, what aid

and energy it gives to it in the breast of every one. Let us lay hold of the cross of Christ. That entire devotedness to God which is a part of the Christian character, you are aware, is to be learned with the greatest advantage in the school of Christ. That person who has laid hold of the propitiation, and is justified by faith, is alone able to realize his peculiar obligations to love his Redeemer. He knows that he is bound by the ties of creation to serve God; but the ties of redemption are more felt now; they are more tender, they are softened by an unction of Divine love; and he is willing to be retained like a victim at the horns of the Divine altar; he feels the force of the appeal to this principle, where the Apostle Paul reminds us that we are not our own, but bought with a price, and adds, "therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." The service he renders is that of a person alive from the dead. All the men in Bethany would acknowledge their obligations to serve God, but Lazarus above all, when called from the grave. "Ye were dead, but now ye are alive in the Lord." And Christ "died for all, that they which live might not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again." Those who have been made alive from the dead, whose sentence of condemnation is repealed, and whose life is of a spiritual nature, they must be devoted to God in the first place, and ultimately to Him by whom this nature is communicated. The whole creation is in a manner forgotten, and what is said as to the general economy of God is said of the sacred economy of God. The heavens and the earth shall not be named in comparison with the new heavens and the new earth he shall form. The apostle tells us, in the Epistle to the Romans, "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." The newness of the spirit is derived from the love of the Redeemer. The same duties are performed, but in a more perfect manner. The old service of God is succeeded by a service of a more perfect kind. The slave serves his master from necessity, the child from love; the slave considers that his service is to be compensated by God, but the child serves freely; the slave has no motive but the fear of the lash, or some slender recompense, and he serves out his duty to his master, but the child enjoys in serving a most perfect freedom: the penurious and reluctant service of the slave is exchanged for the free services of the affectionate child. Hence all the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures are invested with a new character, unknown to one who performs them from mere legal considerations; they are all influenced by love to God, and that arising out of a recollection of benefits received. Morality becomes dignified. There is not an abstract sense of mere cold morality lying at the basis of it;

not a remembrance of the relation he stands in to the Divine Lawgiver, but it comes accompanied with other considerations bearing a more immediate relation to the heart. Religion descends from the cross of Christ, and it lights upon morality; it finds the duties of life in a lower state, and it glorifies, it touches every feature of it.

LXVI.

FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN CHRIST AND BELIEVERS.*

JOHN, XV., 15: *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, Nov. 11, 1830, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

THESE words form a part of the consolatory discourse which our Saviour addressed to his sorrowful disciples, while they partook of the last passover, on the eve of his crucifixion. Here He lets out his heart in a strain of tenderness and endearment, such as is nowhere else to be found in the New Testament. He was deeply affected by the sorrow of his disciples. Any person of an ordinary character would have been absorbed by the sense of personal distress; but He, who foreknew all his own sufferings, appears intent only on the relief of theirs.

There is something in these words appropriate to the apostles; they were present with Him in his most trying moments; they therefore needed and received peculiar supports and consolations: "Ye are they that have continued with Me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you, in my kingdom, a place of pre-eminent honour at my right hand." Let it be granted, then, that these words are not applicable to us to the same extent as they were to the apostles. Still, the reciprocal sentiments of Christ and his Church, such as belong to a spiritual friendship, such as distinguish believers, as not only servants of God, but children, not only servants of Christ, but friends; these sentiments remain the same; and, as Christians, we may, without presumption, consider ourselves as addressed in the text.

I. It may be interesting to spend a few moments on the illustration of this subject.

1. The love which Christ bears towards his people suits the relation of friends better than that which subsists between a master and his servants. Reverence is the appropriate sentiment of a servant towards his master; there is not, in the order of things, so much of affection in that relation. But Jesus Christ loves his people with an

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

intense affection, like that with which He is himself regarded by his Father, as the beloved Son, "in whom," says his Father, "my soul delights." The love of God to Jesus Christ is infinite, inconceivable: yet that love is mentioned as the model of the Saviour's love to his people. The height and depth, the length and breadth, of that love which subsists between the Father and the Son, is incomprehensible: yet the apostle prays "that we may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." And love moves in the heart of a Christian, as a pervading principle of his obedience. Jesus Christ is the object, not only of faith and trust, but also of affection; He reigns in the heart, enthroned in love.

2. This friendship, like any other, has its sacrifices. The sacrifice of Christ was a proof of his great love: to this He appeals, just before the text, in those words, "Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends: ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." His love was costly: it cost Him his body and his soul. He so loved his Church, "that He gave himself for it." No other gift, after this, can be too costly for his love to bestow. And his friends, in return, are ready to give up much, to give up all, for Him: "Whosoever forsakes not father and mother, wife and children, for my sake, is not worthy of me." They deny themselves in their most beloved desires, if those desires are inconsistent with his will. Against all that contradicts his mind they maintain an unrelenting warfare. Their first inquiry, on all occasions, is, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?"

3. There is a delight in the reciprocal intercourse of real friendship. Many we may esteem; but, as they are not our particular friends, we do not feel their absence, nor long after their presence. And there is a fellowship of the believer with Christ. "Truly," says the beloved apostle, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; and these things," he adds, "we write unto you, that ye may share this fellowship with us, and that your joy may be full." Jesus Christ holds intercourse with the souls of his people. His Spirit reveals his riches in a way not to be conceived by others: for none can teach like God. These are their sweetest moments. Christ is their life; they live in Him; they are parts of his mystical body; they prize and seek his spiritual presence; the voice of their heart is, "We would see Jesus;" see Him as displayed in the house of God, in the word of God. A vital communion with Him is what they supremely desire; and, in prayer, they wish to have their hearts softened into love, and centred on Christ. "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" this is the expression of their feeling, as it is given by the bride concerning her Beloved and her Friend, in the mystic Song of Solomon. He is not acquainted with the elements of Christ's love, who does not delight in the daily remembrance of Christ. All real believers feel that attraction to their Saviour, in the remembrance of himself, his offices, his love and grace, which they feel nowhere beside.

4. "The servant knows not what his master does." It is implied

that there is perfect freedom of communication between Christ and his disciples. A servant knows little of his master's mind, as it is communicated to a friend; but here the Master reveals his secrets to his servants, whom He treats as his friends; they know the way of the Lord, they become "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you." . . . And, in return, they keep nothing secret from their heavenly Friend; they spread every matter before the Lord; "they go and tell Jesus;" they commit their cares to Him, confess all their infirmities, all their sins, to Him; to Him who can correct their errors, sympathize with their infirmities, forgive their sins, relieve their sorrows. Such a freedom of intercourse is a delightful ingredient in this sacred friendship.

5. A mutual influence exists between the parties here concerned. Without this, no two persons can be intimate with each other. Friends are drawn together by congeniality, and this is increased by the habit of intercourse; the cause and effect thus mingling in mutual reaction. Few things are better adapted to improve us than the friendship of the wise and good. With Christ we are in the most improving school: "Beholding in Him the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." He is the source and sum of all beauty and blessedness; and to converse with Him is to become like Him. If friendship has a transforming, assimilating influence, so that a man, we say, may be known by his friends; how much more must this be felt and seen where the sentiment of adoration is mixed with every affection that belongs to friendship! Christ, enthroned in the centre of the heart, must have a brightening effect on the whole character.

6. Once more, there is an identity and oneness of interest. A tender friendship destroys separate interests; this is entirely realized in the case before us. Jesus Christ, indeed, makes the first advances; but his people follow, "willing in the day of his power." He sets them apart, and they choose Him; become one with Him in spirit and pursuit. Their happiness is his aim; and they give themselves to Him to be made happy in his love and service. "To me," says Paul, "to live is Christ, and to depart is to be with Christ." It is not, on either side, a solitary happiness. His glory they desire to behold; his afflictions are also theirs; they spend themselves for Him, for the diffusion of his gospel and his grace; they feel that they are not their own, but his.

II. To conclude with one or two reflections.

1. In what a dignified character does a Christian appear, as called to be a friend of Jesus Christ! and what gratitude is due for such an exalted privilege! To be chosen and loved by the Son of God, the Lord of all, the Beloved of the Father, the theme of prophecy, the worship of angels! to call Him, not only our Lord and King, but our Friend and Brother! angels have not an honour like this: "such honour have all his saints!" Saints are nearer than angels to Jesus Christ: He is not their Friend, as He is ours. What gratitude is due

to Him, from those whom He has so highly favoured! all our affections, all our energies, are due to Him.

2. The only evidence which we can give that we are friends of Jesus Christ, is our obedience to his commands. "Then are ye My friends, when ye do whatsoever I command you." His end, in all that He did and suffered, was to obtain for himself an obedient people. "To this end He died and rose, that He might be the Lord of all." If we love Him, we keep his commands. He is the Head, his people are the members, of his mystical body, his Church; and love to Him makes them delight in his ways; impelled by love, "they run and are not weary, they walk and are not faint."

3. What manner of persons, then, ought we, who profess ourselves his friends, to be, in all holy conversation! How ought we to avoid every act of sin, to purify ourselves even as He is pure, to walk in the light, to shine as lights of the world, holding forth the word of life! If we pretend to be friends of Jesus Christ, surely the world will expect us to be above all prevarication, above all unkindness; expect us to be above the course of the world; expect us to manifest a seriousness, a consistency, becoming those who bear such a profession. If we violate the spirit and the example of Christ, He is wounded in the house of his friends. But I would hope better things of many among you, my brethren. Having professed to put on Christ, walk worthy of your high calling; remember what manner of persons you ought to be; looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God, when the world, and all that it contains, shall be dissolved!

LXVII.

THE JOY OF THE DISCIPLES ON THE RESURRECTION OF THEIR LORD.*

JOHN, XX., 20: *Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, April 6, 1828, Easter Day.]

THOUGH Dissenters do not observe the present season as it is observed by some of their Christian brethren, because they find no Divine authority for such observance; yet, I trust, we are very ready to approve of its observance among those who think differently, and we hope that they are not disposed to censure us for following our own judgment: in such things much must be left to every one's conscience; "he that keepeth the day, to the Lord he keepeth it; and he that keepeth it not, to the Lord he keepeth it not." I shall therefore, on this occasion, strike in with the train of reflection to which many are led by the season, and consider the causes of the joy which the resurrection of Jesus Christ excited in his disciples. We can but

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

very faintly realize this joy as they felt it; in them it was proportioned to the sorrow they had felt at his departure.

1. They were glad when they saw the Lord, as it gave proof that He had escaped the fury of his foes. They had lately looked on Him as lost to themselves. "This," they said, in despair, "is now the third day." Now they saw Him completely exempt from danger; and their joy was proportioned to their intense love of their Lord: He had told them, "Ye shall see Me no more, and ye shall have sorrow; but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your joy no man taketh from you." Could He have given them salvation at the expense of his own destruction, it would have yielded them no satisfaction. If David, however thirsty, could not taste of the water, when he regarded it as the price of blood, how could they have enjoyed a deliverance which cost them a Friend they so dearly loved, without his return to them? In proportion as we love our Saviour, we shall rejoice that He is now at the right hand of God; every sincere disciple will feel a sincere joy in the assurance that Jesus Christ is seated on the throne, surrounded by angels, an innumerable multitude, and by the Church of God!

2. A second reason of their gladness at his resurrection was, that it afforded an evidence of his character, and a confirmation of his mission and doctrine. God has shown his complacency in virtue, by crowning it with glory in the exaltation of his Son. The signature of the Divine hand was thus put upon it; and they were enabled to go abroad, and establish Christianity on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Had He not risen, they must have been utterly ashamed and confounded; for He had himself foretold it openly even to his enemies: "I will raise this temple of My body in three days:" "we remember that deceiver said, I will rise again." But now they could appear as "witnesses of his resurrection."* Now Paul could open his Epistle to Rome with the assertion that Jesus Christ was "declared the Son of God by his resurrection;" "raised by the glory of the Father." Who could pretend that the Divine Being would, by this stupendous miracle, give sanction to imposture, and currency to falsehood? Who could suppose God would lay men under an irresistible necessity of believing in the pretensions of the Messiah, unless they were altogether true? His resurrection goes to establish the whole of his mission, every one of his commands, every thing, however mysterious and beyond the sphere of reason, which He taught. We must yield ourselves entirely to this Divine Teacher, for God hath set his seal upon Him. And how thankful to God should we be for having placed our religion on such a basis of evidence, an evidence suited to all minds, intelligible to the multitude as well as to men of research! for the Divine Father has consulted the nature of his creatures by establishing his revelation on a basis of facts, and not merely of speculative arguments; confirmed his word by miracles, and signs, and wonderful gifts of the Spirit. Hence we may rest assured that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church." Infidels

* See Acts, i., 22; ii., 32; iii., 15.

have chosen rather to attack particular parts, than attempt to shake the foundation of facts on which Christianity rests.

3. The resurrection of the Lord made his disciples glad, as it proved the acceptance of his sacrifice, and the completion of his obedience, in behalf of his believing followers. It proved that He gave his life a ransom for sinners, that his blood was shed for the remission of sins, not in vain. His death had been prefigured by sacrifices: when God would no more endure those sacrifices, then said He, "Lo, I come:" He was delivered for our offences; He died for all; and hence all were proved to have been dead. He died to reconcile justice and mercy in the salvation of man; but the proof of his success lies entirely in his resurrection. Without this, his death is like that of an ordinary man; but this proves the merit and power of his death. "Who is he that condemneth? when it is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen from the dead!" Will He, the Judge, condemn those for whom he died and rose? Hence there remains no bar to the salvation of every penitent sinner; the wells of life are opened to all that will come and drink. The bar of justice is removed, justice being reconciled with mercy. For Christ has magnified and honoured the law, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; He has laid a basis for justification, as well as made an atonement for sin. The great question was, "How shall man be just with God?" and the answer has been given: "Christ died, the just for the unjust; God laid on Him the iniquities of us all." This is the source of a joy as extensive as the Church of God; as the tears of penitence mingled with the hope of pardon and the emotion of tender gratitude.

4. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a source of gladness to his friends, as it was a proof of their participation in the blessings which He has procured beyond the present state; a pledge of their entrance into heaven. He rose as the Head of his body, the Church; He entered into the holiest as the Forerunner of his people; it was his prayer "that they all may be with Me, and behold My glory." They will shine, though in an inferior degree, with the lustre of the Son of God; they will partake, according to their respective capacities, the fulness of his joy: his desire will be fulfilled, that their joy may be full. What an astonishing elevation is this, my brethren, for those who "dwell in houses of clay, and who are crushed before the moth!" "He will change our vile body, that it may be like his glorious body." We shall forever derive sanctity from the fountain of the Spirit; the oil of gladness, with which He was anointed, flows freely down to the skirts of his clothing, is diffused among all his followers. We shall be not only with, but like, the Lord; walk with Him in white raiment; ride with the King of kings as his army on white horses; to all eternity partake of his glory, and of that joy which eye hath not seen, nor heart conceived! As we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, so shall we be conformed to the heavenly Adam. To such an extent, where sin had abounded, grace hath superabounded!

5. Finally, the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord, as they had thus a pledge of his protection of his Church from its enemies, and

of its final triumph over all. They were now assured that greater is He that is in the Church than he that is in the world. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" The Almighty sits in heaven, and laughs to scorn the fury of his foes! Michael and his angels fought, and prevailed against the devil and his angels. Antichrist is doomed to destruction. Ere long a voice will be heard in heaven, "Babylon is fallen." Jesus Christ, who has the sovereignty of all things, will tread the wine-press of his wrath; the Church will put her feet on the necks of her foes; Satan will be bruised under her feet shortly; when his enemies rage most furiously, Jesus Christ gives the word, "Hitherto, and no farther!"

Let us keep a serious celebration of the joy which belongs to every remembrance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This day, the Sabbath, is set apart for the veneration of a risen Saviour. We should follow Him from the cross to the crown: "weep with Him when He wept, rejoice when He rejoiced," and be glad, like his disciples, "when they saw the Lord." This joy is not like that of the world, agitated; but pure and calm; it composes the spirit, it refines the affections. All true Christians, however varied, unite in rejoicing in Christ Jesus: He is the attraction of all eyes, and centre of all hearts: in proportion as we are Christians we are thus minded. Let joy in the Lord check the impetuosity of our affections to other objects: all others are passing away; but Christ and heaven will last forever. It is the grand privilege of Christians to rejoice evermore; the object of their joy is unchangeable and eternal: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" "Rejoice in the Lord always," says the apostle; "and again I say, rejoice!"

LXVIII.

THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT.*

ROMANS, xv., 30: *The love of the Spirit.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, August 7, 1828, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

IT may be proper to consider, first, the import of the expression here used.

I. By "the Spirit," I need scarcely say, we are to understand the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. The Spirit is represented as a person throughout the whole Scripture; this appears even more in the original than the version. The doctrine of three Divine persons† is certain; though the manner of

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

† In the verse connected with the text, the three Divine persons are as distinctly recognised as in the apostolic benediction; in both passages the name of "God" being used to designate the Father, while the divinity of Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit are implied in their sacred

their existence, if it can ever be understood, must be left for the light of another world. And this doctrine is most important; it must forever remain undecided to which of these Divine Three we are most indebted for his share in the work of salvation; each is the object of harmonious and eternal adoration. The expression is capable of three meanings:* it may mean either the love of which the Spirit is the author in the heart of the believer; or the love of which the Spirit is himself the object; or, lastly, and most probably, the love which the Spirit bears to them that believe. It is in the last view that I shall consider it.

II. "The love of the Spirit," as a motive to Christian obedience. The Spirit shows love as much as the Father or the Son, though we much more frequently hear of the love of God and of Christ in Scripture. And the love of the Spirit is as much a motive to duty as the grace of Christ itself. The Spirit's operations on the heart are indications of intense attachment. As the love of Christ is displayed chiefly in an external work, so the love of the Spirit is exhibited in his internal operation on the soul.

In order to illustrate this love, consider,

1. The absence of any thing on our part fitted to attract or invite that Holy Agent. "Not of works, but of his mercy, He saves us by the renewing of the Holy Spirit." That the Spirit of God should dwell in a holy mind may be well believed; but what manner of love was this which impelled the Spirit to visit and inhabit as his temple such a mind as that of the natural man! The Spirit is perfectly free and sovereign in his first approaches to the soul.

2. Consider the fruits of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" of what high value are these! What light, order, and beauty they spread over the character! How much they make it to differ from what it would else have been! The difference between nature and chaos is not greater than the difference here produced, when he who was dead in sin is made to dwell in love, to delight in God, and in whatever tends to his glory and the good of man!—a state as superior to that of mere human nature, as the soul is superior to the world of matter.

association with God. It is interesting to observe that Mr. Hall, having been at an early period of his ministry skeptical respecting the personality of the Holy Spirit, appeared in after years peculiarly attentive to this important doctrine, and proportionately zealous to impress it on his hearers. The present sketch illustrates this remark, which had received a more conspicuous illustration in his beautiful tract on "The Work of the Holy Spirit." [Vol. i., p. 233–245, in this edition of his works.]—GRINFIELD.

* Dr. Doddridge interprets the expression as denoting "the love which is the genuine fruit of the Spirit." "Some," he remarks, "would explain it of the love which the Spirit bears to us, or of the affection which we owe to that gracious Agent; and were we certain that either of these were the genuine sense, important consequences would follow." Mr. Hall has preferred the most exalted and the most interesting of these three acceptations; the most probable, also (I concur with his opinion), as that which takes "the love of the Spirit" in a sense parallel with "the love of God" in the apostolic benediction, and with "the love of Christ" as mentioned Romans, viii., 35; 2 Cor., v., 14, and that which best agrees with the claim of Christ thus associated with the claim of the Spirit. "I beseech you by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit." Most of the commentators, however, in unison with Doddridge, understand that "love" which is named as the foremost "fruit of the Spirit."—Gal., v., 22.—GRINFIELD.

3. Consider the happiness imparted by the Spirit. The word of promise has no power to comfort, until it is applied by the Spirit of promise. If we abound in hope, it is through the power of the Holy Spirit. He is emphatically the Comforter; there is no true joy without his influence.

4. Again, the Holy Spirit is the grand and only preparation for eternal happiness. The Spirit seals his subjects to the day of redemption; He gives such a sense of God, and such a union with God, in Christ, as fits them for the heavenly inheritance. They have the first-fruits of the Spirit now; what, then, will be the harvest!

5. Once more, "the love of the Spirit" is displayed in this, that He continues to operate on the heart, amid so much opposition, and so much ingratitude. How often, as the most sincere will acknowledge, have we turned away from his gentle admonitions and silent insinuations, instead of sitting as disciples at his feet, and hearing his voice! It is true that He may have left us for a season in darkness, but how soon was he ready to return to the forsaken mansion, to revive his work as in former times, and retouch his operations! It might have been expected that we should never think of walking in our own light, nor surround ourselves with sparks of our own kindling, instead of his divine illumination; but how different the fact has been, the experience of most believers affords them melancholy proof. Consider, then, the love of the Spirit, as thus variously manifested, in its sovereignty, its blessed effects, its persevering steadfastness; and how powerfully should it induce us to devote ourselves to the Lord.

III. And, by way of brief improvement,

1. Surely we should show returns of love to this Spirit of love; we should regard Him as a specific object of attachment and acknowledgment. If that Spirit which garnished the heavens, which moved on the face of the waters, which sustains and orders all things in nature, condescends to irradiate our darkened souls, what reverence, what gratitude, should we bear to Him! "Will God indeed dwell on the earth?" This is such a condescension as can be paralleled only by that of Jesus Christ! And as He took our nature, so the Spirit imparts his own.

2. We should show ourselves meek and docile to such a Teacher and Guide; prize his influence, thirst after this living water, and never cease to cry, "Lord, evermore give us this bread!" Never let us grieve our Comforter, or where shall we obtain comfort? If we cause this vivifying and sanctifying Spirit to depart, nothing but the deadness of the carnal mind can ensue. Our highest interest is to keep on terms of holy amity and intimacy with Him; to be led by the Spirit, as the children of God, and prepared to walk in all his ways.

3. Let us vindicate the character of this Holy Spirit from all low notions or impressions of his person, his dignity, his power, and importance. Let us pray in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit,

war after the Spirit; "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," and not in our own strength. Let us lay all our conquests at the throne of his grace, and never sacrifice to our own net. Let us hold fast the mystery of the Father, Son, and Spirit, which, though beyond the province of the understanding, is written with a sunbeam, as it appears to me, in all the Scriptures.

Then we shall have much of heaven realized even on earth; we shall come to Mount Sion, to the innumerable company of angels, to the church of the first-born, to Jesus Christ, and the blood of sprinkling: our conversation will be in heaven; and we shall possess such a serenity and cheerfulness of spirit, as will make it manifest to all that we are the pupils of Divine wisdom, recipients of the Divine Spirit, power, and grace. In a word, we shall have God for our Father, Christ for our Redeemer, the Spirit for our Sanctifier.

LXIX.

THE DIVINE INTERFERENCE ON BEHALF OF CHRISTIANS.*

PSALM xlvii., 4: *He shall choose our inheritance for us.*

[Preached at Leicester, date unknown.]

AN allusion here appears to be made to the division of the earth among the sons of Noah after the Deluge. See Deut., xxxii., 7, 8, 9. The division was made by lot, but yet was under Divine direction, so that each family received that particular portion most suited to their peculiar habits and character. It was the same at the time of the division of the land of Canaan among the sons of Jacob: it was made by lot. But though the lot was cast into the lap, the whole disposing thereof was of the Lord. On his part the choice was sovereign; on theirs it was voluntary. This is the literal meaning of the passage. We shall now inquire in what respects this gracious interference on the part of God holds good in the present day, without indulging any of those arbitrary and enthusiastic impressions which many good people have allowed.

Here remark, that in no case does the Divine determination interfere with the exercise of free agency on our part. It is not a separation of causes from their effects, or in any sense a violation of the ordinary course of events. We are required to plough and to sow before we can reap, just as if the Divine aid in bringing the harvest to perfection were not required. It is the sophistry of indolence to sit still under an ostensible regard to Divine agency. Causes are as much under Divine control as effects; and without activity in the one, it is presumption, and not faith, to expect the other.

* Reported in the Pulpit, vol. xxiii.

1. The constant interference on the part of God regards every thing relative to our condition in this finite state of being. The appointment of our prosperity—adversity—sickness—temptations—infirmities of body or mind, personal or relative—the connexions we form—the places we choose for residence—in fact, every circumstance relating to our present condition, however minute or apparently unimportant—these all form parts of the Divine choosing, however hard it may be to reconcile superior determination with the free and unrestrained choice which every individual makes for himself. This superintendence is as extensive as it is minute. He telleth the number of the stars, and he counteth the hairs of our head. In its operation it touches the springs of human determination, without at all infringing on individual liberty; and directs man to the choice, while man chooses for himself. In its vast and boundless efficiency, it comprehends the little circle of our own agency—bounds it, checks it, controls it, and renders it subservient to the purposes of infinite wisdom and benevolence.

2. It includes the special regards which God pays to his own people. "This people have I formed for myself," &c. That interference which is strictly just towards all, towards the people of God wears an aspect of kindness and complacency. It is the discipline of a parent rather than that of a judge, regulating every present arrangement, as provisional and subsidiary to their future and eternal interests.

3. The Divine Spirit chooses our lot, by leading, directing, and regulating the choice we make for ourselves; not by a powerful and immediate control of the will, but by implanting those principles in the mind which, in their voluntary exercise, will form a choice agreeably to the Divine mind. "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

II. The propriety and advantage of leaving the choice of our inheritance to God. This is, indeed, nothing more than cheerfully recognising the just exercise of his own prerogative; He will eventually do it, whether we will or not. But it is best voluntarily to leave it with God, because, 1st. It is infinitely wise and fit that He should choose our inheritance for us. To show the propriety of such a disposition, Jeremiah drew his followers to the potter's field: read Jer., xviii., 2–6. Many of the events and changes of life are forced, as it were, upon us, by the circumstances with which we are surrounded; and if we possess a consciousness of having left the choice of our condition with God, how sweet is the reflection, even though that condition may not be agreeable to our wishes! How very few of the benefits we enjoy are the result of our own wisdom and foresight! "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Every agent in society, and every element in nature, may be charged with a blessing or a curse; and whether the one or the other should light upon us, can best be left to the determination of Him who knows both what we are and what we should be made.

2. This arrangement is infinitely best for ourselves. The task of

first forming a human soul for glory, and then bringing that soul to its possession, is what none but God himself could accomplish. The whole of the host of heaven combined would shrink from the charge of conducting but one soul through such a world of snares and enemies: how great the wisdom, then, to "bring many sons to glory!" Good men themselves also have felt the difficulty in reference to their own case; and the best of them have discovered their wisdom in proportion to the confidence they have reposed on the Captain of their salvation. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

How awful has been the condition of many, who, following their own worldly propensities, and not regarding the word or the will of God, have made choice of an inheritance for themselves! Witness the case of Lot. Led aside by the well-watered plain, he heeded not the character of its inhabitants, nor the snares and temptations to which himself and his family would in this situation be exposed. Witness, also, the case of the Jews in the days of Jeremiah, who warned them not to go to Egypt: see Jer., liii., 7–22.

We may apply the same inquiry to many of ourselves in the present day. Have we not sought our temporal interests too much to the neglect of our spiritual welfare?

Again: Have not Christians felt their satisfaction to rise in exact proportion to that degree of implicit confidence they have reposed in a Divine and unseen hand?

What encouragement have we to the exercise of this confidence, from the ultimate promises which are made to us? Heaven is our purchased inheritance, and He who gave his own Son as the price of this purchase, will surely, with infallible wisdom and love, conduct us to its enjoyment.

LXX.

OBSCURITIES OF PROVIDENCE EXPLAINED.*

JOHN, xiii., 7: *What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.*

I. There are many parts of the dispensations of Providence which are at present extremely intricate and mysterious.

1. In relation to the Church at large; such as the speedy and extensive corruptions of Christianity, the early dissensions which obscured the lustre of the Reformation, the unexpected revival of the papal cause in Europe, after it had appeared to be irrecoverably depressed.

2. In the more private history of Christianity, many are the cloudy dealings of God, which seem perfectly unaccountable, which we find it difficult to reconcile with the Divine faithfulness and goodness. "All these things are against me."

* From Mr. Hall's own manuscript.

II. Hereafter we shall be permitted to discover the reason and propriety of those operations of Providence which now appear covered with so much obscurity. There are the following reasons for believing this :

1. Hereafter a great extension of knowledge will be afforded. Now we know but in part, and prophesy but in part, but when that which is in part shall be done away, then that which is perfect shall come. Now we see through a glass darkly, then shall we know even as also we are known.

2. The knowledge which will be enjoyed in a future world will chiefly consist of that which has God for its object. They shall see HIS face ; they shall worship Him night and day in his temple, to behold the glory of God, which forms the principal ingredient in our felicity.

3. The dealings of God to his Church compose a complete system, fraught with the most striking indications of wise and gracious contrivance, to the intent that to principalities might be made known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. The Church of Christ in heaven is represented as taking a deep interest in the affairs of the Church militant. "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Hallelujah." "Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments, for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the world with her fornications, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hands ; and again they said, Hallelujah."

4. Nothing can be considered more calculated to administer to the delight of the redeemed, than to retrace, in an unerring light, all the dark and intricate paths of Divine Providence. Reminiscences of the past form a distinguishing feature in the employment of a celestial mind, and the more momentous the aspect of past transactions, the greater and the more glorious the issue.

LXXI.

EXISTENCE AND PERSONALITY OF SATAN.*

MATTHEW, iv., 1 : *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, August 15, 1824.]

A BELIEF in the existence and agency of an evil spirit, whom we style Satan, or the devil, has been coeval with every age of the Christian Church. Such a doctrine was never called in question until recently, and now only, we are happy to add, by a class of Christians

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield. See another sermon on the same subject, from Mr. Hall's own manuscript, vol. iii., p. 41–51.—B.

very inconsiderable in comparison with that great majority which adhere to the leading articles of revelation. Nor is this a doctrine of small moment, whether believed or discarded; it is no independent speculation that may stand or fall alone: it enters deep into the whole nature and genius of Christianity: it has a close and important relation to the plan of redemption; since "for this cause the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil:" throughout the Scriptures, the kingdom of Christ is represented as opposed to the kingdom of Satan, and the subjects of the one to those of the other; while the malignant activity of Satan is mentioned as a principal motive to Christian sobriety and vigilance. To disbelieve this doctrine is to change the whole aspect of the gospel, to cast Christianity in an entirely new mould, and to render a great part of the Scriptures perfectly unintelligible. And let it be observed, that there exists no objection against such a doctrine, arising out of any previous principles or prejudices of the human mind. The question of the existence and agency of an evil spirit is one which must be decided solely by revelation. No data can be furnished by reason leading us either to the belief or disbelief of this doctrine. It is the office of reason to make discoveries concerning the properties of external nature, to pursue a great multitude of inquiries respecting the objects presented by the astonishing frame of the visible world, because all these things are subject to the observation of our senses. It is the office of our reason, also, to investigate the properties and powers of the human mind, to ascertain with some degree of precision the laws which regulate its various movements, to discuss the modes of cogitation and feeling, because these things are subjects of human experience and consciousness. But in a question which respects the existence and agency of a higher order of beings, we possess no similar data whatever by which to regulate our opinion, as these beings are supposed to exist beyond the sphere of sense: so that reason is qualified to form no previous deductions here.

We know, indeed, that beings appear to exist in an interminable series, descending from ourselves downward, until they reach the verge of nothing. But the probability arising hence is, that there exists a corresponding series of beings on the ascending side of the scale; and none will deny that, between us and the Deity, there is ample room for all the possible orders and varieties of rational existence. So far, then, the appearances of nature are in favour of the doctrine of angels and spirits.

Some have objected to this doctrine, as contradicting an assumed hypothesis of their own, that *matter* (at least in all cases but that of the Supreme Being) is essential to the existence of spirit and mind. Such an objection, however, is totally unfounded. All our experiments on matter tend to prove that, in itself, it is merely passive; that it owes all its acts and motions to the presence of mind. The common prejudice that matter is essential to the exertion of energy and power, is the very reverse of what Scripture teaches on the subject. The Prophet Isaiah reproaches the Israelites for their vain confidence

in the help of Egypt, by saying, "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are *flesh*, and *not spirit;*" and, on that account, he implies, they are perfectly weak as opposed to God. God himself is infinitely removed from the most exquisite organs of sense; yet no one for a moment doubts that God is omnipotent, or supposes that his pure *spirituality* forms any other than his capacity of infinite excellence and energy: we know that He is not merely a Being, but that He is the very substance and essence, so to speak, of all being, the repository of all power.

It is in unison with reason, therefore, to infer that man is not the highest masterpiece of the Divine skill—not the crown of all intelligent beings; but, rather, that he forms an intermediate link in the chain, between others which are above him, as well as a multitude below him. And this seems to be nearly all that reason has to offer on this mysterious subject.

Here we must have recourse to a different source of information: that which is supplied by the sacred Scriptures. If these contain any single distinct assertion, or, what is more, any number of such assertions, that there exists a race of beings above man, and of a spiritual nature, there is nothing to contradict such a doctrine in the deductions of reason. "To the law," therefore, "and to the testimony." Revelation distinctly informs us of an order of beings denominated angels—an order far superior to man in rank and power—denominated also spirits, from their nature being either purely spiritual, or, at least, far more so than the nature of man, who is an incarnate spirit. We hear of them as variously called, holy angels, angels of light, angels that excel in strength, principalities and powers in heavenly places. They appear in all parts of the Bible; and one book in particular is expressly said to have been given by the instrumentality of an angel: for in the opening of the last book we read, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which He sent and signified by his angel unto his servant John." Another apostle, far from intimating that the smallest doubt of their existence or office was entertained in that first age of the gospel, appeals to his brethren respecting them in those words, "Are they not all ministering spirits?" &c.

But, farther, we are informed on this subject, that a portion of these angels "kept not their first estate," departed from God by disobedience, and are now "reserved under chains and darkness to the judgment of the great day." *One* of these, pre-eminent in dignity and power, is frequently introduced by the name *Satan*, or the *devil:* a name, let it be observed, which is never in the Scriptures applied to more than *one* being. We hear, indeed, of devils, in the plural number; but the name is improperly used in our version; in the original language it is always demons. Of these there may be a great multitude; but they are always so distinguished from their prince and leader in evil, that there is but *one* "devil and his *angels*." To mark his fraud and cruelty, he is sometimes styled a serpent or dragon. In Rev., xii., 9, we read of the great dragon: "that old serpent, the devil and Satan." In this form he seduced our first parents, and effected

the ruin of mankind in their original head. From that period his empire on earth commences, as erected in rebellion against the kingdom of God and his Christ; an empire composed of ignorance, idolatry, impiety, cruelty, and vice; alienation from God, and disobedience to his holy will and law: these are the ingredients and principles of Satan's empire in the world.

As soon as Christianity made its appearance, the devil exerted himself to oppose its progress, regarding Christ as his grand adversary. All unconverted nations are portions of his dominion: his agents are represented as "the rulers of the darkness of this world." His office is to blind the judgments of men, efface all spirituality from their minds; to stifle their consciences, harden their hearts, and sink them deeper and deeper in sensuality and vice. In the Revelation, "the serpent casts a flood of waters out of his mouth," in order, if possible, that the woman who had brought forth the man-child might be carried away by the deluge. This represents the great concern which Satan takes in exciting violent persecution against the Church of Christ. In all sin, in all opposition to Christ, there is a mixture of diabolic influence; this is frequently expressed in Scripture. When Judas tempted our Saviour, Satan is said to have entered into his heart: when Ananias attempted, by a mercenary evasion, to keep back part of his money from the Lord, "why," said Peter, "hath Satan filled thy heart, that thou shouldst lie unto the Holy Ghost? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The prejudices which keep men of the world from receiving the religion of Christ, are traced by an apostle to Satanic agency on the mind: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ (who is the image of God) should shine upon them:" elsewhere he speaks of Satan as "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The whole state of mankind is subject to "the prince of the power of the air:" "We know," says John, "that the whole world lieth in the wicked one." To make men Christians is, according to the Scriptures, to "translate them out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God:" this is the express purpose for which the Apostle Paul received his commission to the Gentiles.

There is not a scene of wickedness, in short, in which Satan has not a part and an influence, so that it forms a portion of his empire on earth; and this, not always by his own immediate acts, but by the medium of those who serve as his agents and instruments. Let it not be supposed that, by such a view, we ascribe ubiquity to the devil, and invest him with the essential, incommunicable omnipresence of Deity. Nothing, you are well aware, is more common and established among mankind, in the use of language, than to attribute to the principals and leaders that which is done under their authority and influence. By this abridged and abstract form of expression, which assigns all the operations of many concurring agents to one chief, unity of design is better maintained, and greater facility of language acqui-

red, than by a more explicit and circuitous mode of speaking. Every one understands what is meant; no one ever supposes that the individual named as the representative of the whole body over which he presides, is really *omnipresent*, or himself personally the *author* of all that is done; not the smallest confusion arises from this practice of imputing the multifarious operations of thousands to *one* superior. Now, supposing the existence of such an evil spirit as Satan, where is the impropriety of ascribing to him, as the chief of infernal spirits, the great source and promoter of wickedness on earth, all the evil that is in fact executed by the multitudes that obey his influence and belong to his empire? Nor does any just objection arise against the Divine benignity, from the vast and baleful influence of Satan. How is it inconsistent with the benevolence of God, that He leaves Satan to pursue his own evil designs? The numerous and severe difficulties that beset the path of religion in no degree impair our conviction either of the importance of religion, or of the Divine benevolence: those difficulties arise from our fallen and depraved nature, and they must remain until the cause is removed. Apply this principle to the mischief of Satan, as not inconsistent with the goodness of God: it would not be supposed to disparage the paternal tenderness of the prince of any country, that, notwithstanding the excellence and blessings of his government, there existed in his dominions a tract infested with robbers.

I proceed to notice the principal modes of misinterpreting the Scriptures on the subject before us, the most frequent sophistries by which it has been attempted to evade the doctrine of Satan's existence and personality. It is impossible here to advert to all the passages of Scripture, or all the glosses that have been invented: the examination of a few of each will serve as a key to unlock similar difficulties. The most general evasion employed to displace the existence of Satan is, that in most instances where he is mentioned, it is not a real existence, not a personal agent that is intended, but merely a personification of the principle of evil, according to a well-known figure of speech. A personification, or prosopopœia (you need scarcely be reminded), is that figure of speech by which person, voice, agency, are ascribed to the conceptions and abstractions of the mind, for the purpose of greater animation and vividness, especially in the productions of eloquence and poetry. In the book of Job this figure is copiously employed: we meet with personifications there of death, the deep, the height, wisdom, and the like: "Where is the place of wisdom? the deep says, It is not in me; and the height says, It is not in me; death, and the plague, and famine say, We have heard the fame thereof." Here is abundance of personification, yet there is no obscurity here: who is there that does not understand that the language is merely designed for poetic animation and effect? Accordingly, this figure is always introduced in the most impassioned parts, and never with propriety when the discourse is evidently calm and temperate; it would be harsh and unnatural, unless the hearer were supposed to be wrought up to a degree of enthusiasm. But where

Satan is mentioned in the Scriptures, the style is usually of the gravest and most unimpassioned character: yet, in the midst of such a style, this figure (as Unitarians suppose) is quite as frequent as in the poetical parts. For example, in 1 John, iii., 8, "He that committeth sin is of the devil;* for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Try he Unitarian hypothesis on this passage, and see what the result will prove; substituting the principle of evil for the devil, we obtain this proposition: "The principle of evil, that is, sin, sinneth from the beginning:" what can be more strange, what more futile and trivial, than to assert that sin sins? and this rendered yet more inexplicable by the addition "from the beginning!" But take the words in their natural import, understand that "Satan sinneth from the beginning," and there is meaning in the passage: from the period of his first rebellion against God, or from that of his first temptation of man, he has been the author of all sin, and all sinners evince themselves his children. Again, in John, viii., our Saviour says to the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye do: when he speaketh of a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it:" where Jesus Christ himself (to speak it with reverence) must be supposed to trifle even more than his apostle, if we take the principle of evil for the father of lies who speaketh of his own in lying: but in the natural meaning of the words, He gives us a most important piece of information; namely, that the devil corrupted mankind in their spring and fountain, and that falsehood is the essence of his character: this enlarges the sphere of our knowledge, opening to us an awful view of our great adversary, and utterly avoids the egregious trifling just referred to, so unworthy the dignified wisdom of God! Jesus Christ came that we might believe his communications: if the Unitarian interpretation of such a passage is to be believed, it remains no doubt equally certain that we must believe it, but the importance of the truth communicated is strangely reversed!

In Eph., vi., the apostle exhorts his brethren to "put on the whole armour of God, that they might be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not (says he) against flesh and blood, but against principalities," &c.; in which passage he denies something, and he affirms something; he first sets aside "flesh and blood" as the chief enemy of our salvation; where none will deny that he means by "flesh and blood," human beings: as when our Saviour says to Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father in heaven:" the apostle, then, declares that men were not the most prominent enemies of our salvation; but that these were to be found in beings of a higher order, in "principalities, powers, the rulers of darkness, spirits of wickedness." How are we to apply the principle of evil here? It is not to be applied here, we are told, as, indeed, it cannot be, since the principalities spoken of are in the plural number, but the principle of evil is one. The answer, therefore, in this case is, that by these principalities we are to understand the Jewish and

* That is (as the context implies), *born* of the devil.

the pagan magistrates, as opposed to the rising Church of Christ. But these are either "flesh and blood," or they are nothing: they are either a part of the human race, or they have no existence at all. Thus the apostle sets aside men, that he may place men in their stead! thus the principalities in question are evidently "not flesh and blood," according to the apostle, and they as evidently are "flesh and blood," according to common sense!*

Lastly, with regard to the text itself; in adverting to which, it is far from my intention to detain you by a discussion of the circumstances of the temptation which it records. Waving all remark of that kind, I would merely observe, that, in the temptation, Christ and the devil are the only two persons concerned; they are left alone together; there is no room for the hypothesis of Jewish or pagan magistrates here; we must resort once more to the principle of evil; either the devil was a real person, or the principle of evil. But evil is an abstract quality, an attribute, a property, not to be conceived existing apart from some being to whom it may adhere; it is necessarily a modification of character and mind: in the present instance, this character must be that of Jesus Christ himself, since we have no choice of any other. Satan vanishes away in the principle of evil, and Jesus Christ is left alone. But the principle of evil is always and essentially evil; and, therefore, Jesus Christ must be the same! The principle of evil is the fountain of all evils; and, therefore, such is Jesus Christ! whatever is said in other passages of Scripture concerning the principle of evil, must be applied equally to Jesus Christ! But are any who profess themselves followers of the spotless Lamb of God, prepared for such a doctrine as this? prepared to identify universal, invariable, essential evil with Him who did no sin, Him in whom Satan could find nothing, Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners!" yet He, on the Unitarian ground, must be viewed as the principle of evil! No wonder those who take that ground have not hesitated to insinuate that, however blameless our Lord's public deportment, we know nothing of his private and secret character.

Let me notice, before I conclude, one remaining objection to this fallacious and injurious hypothesis: namely, that whenever the figure of personification is used, the word employed to personify the object is the same word which denotes the object personified. Suppose the personification to be that of philanthropy, no one would ever think of employing any other word than philanthropy itself. It is not an enigmatical mode of speech: it is expressly designed to illuminate and enforce the idea conveyed; but to substitute another word would tend only to darken the sense and destroy the impression. Why, then, should an ambiguous alteration of the term be employed in the case before us? Why should we suppose sin to be personified by Satan? Critical disquisitions without number have been written upon various other peculiarities of language; but was there ever a question raised

* A felicitous example of *reductio ad absurdum*. That which succeeds in the next paragraph is yet more admirable.—GRINFIELD.

concerning a prosopopœia, whether a personification was or was not one, since the world began? Can it be conceived, that after ages in which never was a suspicion of such a figure being so used as it is now pretended by some, the mystery was reserved to be detected at last by a class of persons, certainly not superior in learning or intellect to all besides themselves, and, with regard to their paucity of numbers, perfectly insignificant? and this, when we know that the figure is one that requires always to discover itself in the clearest, broadest light, so that "he that runs may read it?" No grosser violation can well be invented of the most established laws of human thought and composition; nothing more decidedly at war with language; from the first age of the Christian Church to the end of time.

If the word of God is really to be received as such, do not hesitate, my dear brethren, to yield yourselves to the fullest assent here! This is no doctrine obscurely or scantily intimated: it pervades the whole mass of Scripture, floats upon the surface of revelation; it is impossible to escape it, mixed up as it is with all the exhortations and cautions of Christ and the apostles—the doctrine that there is a great evil being, who has acquired a vast and a fatal ascendency over this lapsed world of mankind! But if this is a true, a certain doctrine, it places the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ in a most affecting light. Can you remain unconcerned, or but faintly interested, in that salvation, which moves at once earth, heaven, and hell? For while you, as sinners here on earth, are the peculiar subjects of human redemption, we know of no other concern that finds place in heaven or hell. All are divided by God as subjects either of Christ or of Satan.

Satan has his empire in darkness; there he reigns and revels; there he meditates his deadly devices, and casts his fiery darts against the souls of men; while he triumphs in the fatal security of those unhappy multitudes who, engrossed with vanity and sin, yield themselves an easy prey to his temptations! like the strong man whose goods were in safety, while he remained unmolested by one stronger than himself. But Jesus Christ has come to disarm and destroy Satan; He is come as a new King, a new Master; He has brought in new light, and established a new dominion over the hearts of men. And will you for a moment hesitate whose you are, and whom you serve? undetermined whether you will enlist under the banner of Christ or of Satan? whether you will take part with the great author of apostacy and misery, or walk with the blessed Jesus? Open your eyes, my dear brethren, to see the infatuation of mind, the hardness of heart, the pollution, the despair, the tyranny of overbearing passions and guilty terrors, "the carnal mind, enmity against God," under which the captives of Satan labour! Open your eyes, to see Jesus Christ come to pass an act of complete oblivion for all your offences, come to offer a perfect refuge from the wrath of God, a perfect armour against the assaults or artifices of the devil! Embrace Him, and you are rescued from Satan; He will bruise Satan under your feet shortly! He will restore you to your lost inheritance; and cause an eternal paradise, in the place of that which you have lost, to spring up within your

heart! His gospel comes, that you may be washed, sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God! Consider the worth of your soul, when it is the prize at stake between heaven and hell! Angels are looking down with anxiety and agitation (if these can be known in heaven) on the issue of this awful contest! Satan and the powers of darkness are perpetually on the watch, and struggling to retain you as their wretched victims! Whenever you are tempted to sin, view it as marked with all the characters of diabolic malice! In every instance in which you yield to sin, remember that you are only riveting your fetters! rejoicing your grand enemy! and sinking with him into the abyss of hopeless ruin! "Behold, now is the accepted time!" Let it be yours to give yourself to Christ, the Good Shepherd, who stands with outstretched arms ready to receive every returning wanderer! As there is joy in hell over every sinner deluded to his ruin, so is there joy in heaven, a reflection of the joy of the Saviour, and the love of God, over every sinner that repents! Make haste to occasion this celestial joy! Make haste to escape from that kingdom of darkness and horror! It is a lost kingdom! it is a blasted kingdom! and those who die within its confines must have their portion forever with the devil and his angels!

LXXII.

THE DIVINE PROMISES.*

2 Corinthians, i., 20: *All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, February 11, 1830, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

In connexion with these words, the apostle is vindicating himself from the charge of inconstancy, in reference to his having formed a purpose which he had not fulfilled, of paying a second visit to the Corinthians. Such, however, was the spirituality of his mind, that he quickly turns from himself to the constancy of God in that gospel which contains the surest of all promises. As he had to do with a religion "full of truth, as well as of grace," so he desired to be sincere in his own conduct. He represents the Divine promises as all centring in Christ. In considering his words, selected as the text, we may notice, first, some of the chief of these promises; secondly, their certainty; and, thirdly, the end to which they are directed, "the glory of God."

I. The promises of God are very various. In general, they respect either this world or the next.

1. The great promise, as to the next world, is that of eternal

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

life. St. John emphatically observes, "This is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life." What this includes, it is impossible for us in our present state fully to explain or comprehend: but it is a state of perfect bliss, into which believers will be finally introduced by the resurrection of the body, as a glorious body, reunited to the spirit, in resemblance of their glorified Saviour. There will be a great enlargement of all the sources, and all the capacities, of happiness, far beyond what we can now conceive. The present is an infantine state of being: "it does not yet appear what we shall be;" but there the redeemed will be with Christ, and will behold his glory: this was his own declaration. They will be all united in the most intimate communion with Him, and with each other: they will renew their former friendships, retrace their past experience on earth, and never more go out. It is a state that will exclude all want of good, all presence of evil. Never would the mind of man have been sufficiently expanded to imagine such an existence: it exceeds even the fictions of imagination, which never, in its brightest moments, or widest excursions, conceived what are the sober realities of Divine revelation in regard to the future happiness of God's redeemed.

2. But the promises of the gospel relate also to the present state. We have the promise of Christ himself, that, if we love and obey Him, He will be always with us; not in a bodily manner, but by his Spirit: "By this we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us."—1 John, iii. The communion which Christians thus enjoy with Christ is often of a more spiritual and endearing nature than that which his apostles enjoyed before his departure. "If any man love Me, I will love him, and will manifest myself to him: If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in, and sup with him, and he shall sup with Me." He promised his Spirit as the Comforter. Through the strength of Christ imparted to them, his people overcome all difficulties, and often realize such a promise as those words express, "When thou walkest through the fire, it shall not come nigh thee; through the floods, they shall not overwhelm thee." The apostle was sustained in his trials by the confidence that "the power of Christ would rest upon him;" "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." The sanctification of Christians is progressive; their likeness to Christ augments; their path is like that of light, that brightens from the glimmering dawn to the perfect day. Their victory over the world is acquired by faith in Christ: by this they learn to trample upon the world, at least in their better moments, as they proceed on their way to glory. Such is the experience of all true believers, and such the extent of the promises of God.

II. The certainty of these promises. They are "all yea and amen, in Christ." They all rest on Christ; purchased by his blood; applied by his Spirit: they endear Him to the believer.

"Yea and amen" are modes of affirming a thing; the latter word is the more solemn: the expression denotes that nothing can be so sure. Two things are implied in this assurance: first, that we should believe that God has promised; and then, that what He has promised is true.

1. That God has promised the greatest blessings, it is impossible to doubt. The promises of his word are very explicit; they are not like those of the pagan oracles, which, as it has been said, "kept the word of promise to the ear, and broke it to the hope." And they are proved to be the promises of God, by all the miracles of Christ, and especially by his resurrection, in conformity with, and in fulfilment of, his Father's promise. His resurrection, following his death, proved its efficacy. Hence the apostle says, "He was delivered for our offences, and raised for our justification." We have just as much evidence of the promises being Divine, as we have of Christ's entire mission.

2. But if God did promise, his promises must be true. For, in the first place, God cannot lie: and, as the apostle immediately adds to that character of God, "He hath promised us eternal life."—Titus, i., 2. Can we doubt of the truth which proceeds from the Fountain of truth? Men may falsify their word; but "God is not a man, that He should lie." Besides which, men may promise, and not be able to perform; but to God all things are possible. Men often promise in the dark, not foreseeing the consequences of their promises; but to God the whole future, a vast eternity, is present. Men often repent of their promises, uttered in a moment of warm feeling; they want continuity in attachment: not so God; He cannot change: not so Christ; He loves his own to the end; He rests in his love: it is an everlasting love: the saints are spoken of as "chosen in Christ before the world began:" "whom He foreknew, them He predestinated, called, justified, glorified." Measure not the stability of his promises by that of man's: his thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth!

III. The end to which the promises of God are directed—his own glory. His essential glory cannot be increased; but it is for the display of his glory that his promises are made and established. And it is in his dealings with the Church that the chief display of his glory is made; the display of his moral perfections in the redemption of man by Jesus Christ. Heaven, with all its splendours, cannot surpass this exhibition of the moral glory of God. The difficulties to be overcome were inconceivable: there were mountains of wrath on the one side, and mountains of guilt on the other! How shall God's law be satisfied? His government be sustained? How shall such a world of apostate beings ever be qualified to sit down with God in heaven? These are the questions which Christ has answered, to "the glory of God the Father!" How illustrious will He appear, who, through death, has overcome death, and won a crown of glory, not only

for himself, but for all his followers! How will it redound to the glory of his Father, that, in spite of all the rebellion of the world, He shall be seen to have sent forth his gospel, "conquering and to conquer;" while nothing could overcome that victorious love, which has piled up a temple of eternal glory, on which the top-stone shall be laid, with shouts of "Grace, grace," from the countless company of the redeemed! The words are easily spoken; but the great realities are not to be conceived. Every vessel will be filled with all that is implied in eternal life, in perfect sanctification, in the beatific vision, in being forever with and like the Lord! a glory infinitely worthy of God himself to bestow, and of the desire of all his creatures!

One obvious improvement of this subject, the only one that I can mention, is, that we should be much in meditation on the Divine promises. We should be mindful, indeed, of the threatenings of God; we should not be inattentive to the prophecies contained in his word: but it is peculiarly the duty, as well as the privilege of Christians, to meditate upon his promises. If you would enter into the vital reality of religion, you must enter into these promises; into their pure and sanctifying consolations. Taste of the love of God! Review the riches of your inheritance! Look to the Saviour as the source of all fulness! Endeavour to let your mind be saturated with these promises! Oh, let us not be satisfied with a cold, a formal, legal obedience to the commandments: let us learn to feed upon the sweetness of the promises! And we shall need their support ere long: time is hastening from us all; man is but breath, but dust! soon you will be here no more. He that shall come, will come ere long! Happy they that hope and wait for his coming! Every day, if you are a Christian, you are nearer to heaven; less of toil and trial remains. And death, as well as life, is yours; to die is your exceeding gain. "I heard a voice from heaven saying, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them."

LXXIII.

HOLY DESIRES GRATIFIED.*

REVELATION, xxi., 6: *And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

[Preached at Cambridge, February 14, 1802.]

WITHOUT detaining you by any introduction, I shall at once proceed,

I. *To explain what is meant by the subject of this promise, which is couched in figurative terms.*

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

It is evidently something extraordinary, from the solemn and magnificent manner in which it is introduced by the Being that inhabits eternity. A command is given to John to write the contents of it: "*He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*" It is certain that what is introduced by God with so much pomp and solemnity means something spiritual and Divine, something that bears no sort of relation to worldly good; for it is to be conferred in full perfection after the resurrection of the dead, when "*both small and great shall stand before God,*" and every one be judged "*according to the deeds done in the body;*" when "*the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and the grave deliver up their dead;*" when the great business shall be finally settled, and "*all things shall be made new.*" Nothing will then remain, excepting that which good men will enjoy in God, his everlasting favour, communicated to them through Jesus Christ. His is a free gift, and therefore the proper subject of promise. Man, had he continued innocent, would have obtained a reward for his obedience; but, having incurred the Divine displeasure by sin, he can only be restored by a free act of grace. Jesus Christ is the channel by whom all favours are bestowed; and He is appointed to be the "*Head over all things to the Church:*" "*of Him, and to Him, and through Him, are all things.*" We are reconciled to God by his death and sacrifice. Such an illustrious sacrifice being made for sin, God will forgive and renovate sinners, and restore them to that state which they had lost by their iniquities.

The blessings which are conferred in consequence of recovering the Divine favour are frequently compared to water. Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, as he is called, declares, in the name of God, "*I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;*" and "*with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*" Again, "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.*" Our blessed Lord also adopted this figure, to convey the idea of spiritual blessings. "*He that believeth in me shall never thirst.*" "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*" In his discourse with the woman of Samaria, He compares them to a spring of living water, than which nothing can more properly represent the purifying, sanctifying nature of religion. They are also compared to bread, which Jesus Christ came down from heaven to give. There are many figures in this book taken from paradise; such as, for instance, a *fountain of life;* alluding to that river which went out of Eden to water the garden, whence it was parted into four heads. The Apostle John says, "*He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*" As man, in a state of innocence, had a tree of life, so this has a tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits; and, to raise our conceptions of its nature, it is said to "*yield her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*"

"*I will give to him that is athirst.*" By this thirst is meant a vehement desire after the promises of the gospel; but it is proper to consider it somewhat more distinctly and at large.

First. It implies a conviction of the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to constitute our bliss. Whatever individuals have sought happiness in the waters of the world, if honest, they must confess that they have never found it. They turn from the pleasures of sense and the gayeties of youth, to the pursuits of ambition; they consider time is lost unless it increases their fountain of influence; they dismiss all thoughts of God until old age advises them that they must quit their sins, and then they confess the vanity of their condition. But the sacred Spirit of God, the wisdom that is from above, teaches us differently, without waiting for the slow confessions of age. It teaches us that the present state is but a passage, not a final home; that it was never fitted for us as a final end. This wisdom instructs all her children that an imperishable substance must have an imperishable good. Having obtained the true knowledge of God, the mind naturally yields itself up to his disposal, conscious of the Divine favour as that true centre to which every thing really excellent tends. Wisdom teaches true Christians to look with compassion upon those who have their portion in this world. They see the world full only of fading charms, they perceive that every thing the world calls great is nothing but a magnificent ruin, if God and religion are excluded from the prospect; and their language is, with David, "*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*"

Secondly. The thirst to which the promise is made intends not only a conviction of the vanity of the world, but of the reality and importance of spiritual blessings. There is sufficient evidence to satisfy every reasonable man of the truth; yet this disposition of mind is sometimes stamped as enthusiasm: but let every one here consider it as that which God and Scripture sanction. If you have any doubts on the subject, consider only the general tenour of the word of God, and you will find that "*these are the true sayings of God:*" and, from the foresight of the disposition of man to disbelieve them, He commands the apostle to write, "*For these words are true and faithful.*" Remember the invitations of God: "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.*" Let those who entertain doubt, attend to the experience of the pious in every age of the world, and in every dispensation. There is, assuredly, some credit to be given to those who have attested the truth of religion. Let infidels ridicule them, or those who feel not the power of religion; but may my lot be to live with them who say, with Jacob, "*I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!*" God is accustomed to reward his servants by giving them present comfort, and, in anticipation of future blessedness, the heirs of heaven are sealed by the Spirit of God to the day of redemption; but to drink unmingled happiness is the privilege of those who are around the throne of God. Yet there is a river, even here, "*the streams whereof make glad the city of God.*"

Thirdly. This thirst is to be understood as that which has a decided ascendency over every other desire.

There may be transient wishes in the minds of most men for the blessings of religion; but these by no means correspond with the force of the expression here used. It is not some faint breathings after happiness to which the promise is made: there must be a predominant desire after spiritual blessings. This is evident from our Saviour's declarations. He would permit none to be his disciples that did not prefer Him to father and mother, brother and sister, houses and lands, yea, wife and children. He affirms, farther, "*No man that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is worthy of me.*" These are very serious declarations, and they will detect the vanity of those who place religion in occasional feelings. The young man in the gospel did not come up to the standard, because he refused to resign all at the requisition of Jesus. He had some sincere desires to be happy, but he had more for his possessions. The promises of the word of God are made to characters; and these characters are taken, not from the qualities that lightly distinguish them, but from those that predominate. Thus, a man is not a learned man because he is acquainted with the first elements of language, or can read the breviary; so, according to the whole tenour of the Divine word, he is not considered a Christian who loves pleasure more than God. He is not considered a servant of Christ who only calls Him Lord; but he who has the habit of obedience. He is not considered heavenly-minded who has some occasional thoughts of heaven; but he whose treasure is there. He is not a follower of the faith by which the ancient worthies overcame the world, who loves the world; but he who renounces the world, and knows that the favour of God is greater than all its riches, honours, and ambition. It is this thirst for spiritual blessings, and this prevalence of it in the heart over every other desire, to which the promise is given; and of which, if we stop short, we deceive ourselves to our eternal ruin.

II. I shall lay before you, my brethren, *some considerations which, under the agency of the Divine Spirit, will tend to produce in us these desires.*

First. Reflect upon the greatness of these promised blessings. "*I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*" Learn from the blessings themselves, that to be happy is to be in the enjoyment of God, in the presence of angels, in a perpetual calm of our passions—to be placed in a state of permanent felicity, where there will be nothing in the present to molest, nothing in the future to fear, nothing in the past to torment; but where we shall be forever near God, and like Him, where "*they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.*" Angels, who look into these things, are astonished to see the insensibility of many persons in our Christian assemblies to such promises as these. Consider, my brethren, the magnificent things by which these are represented. They are principally described in Scripture by figurative terms, taken from other objects, and

intended for other purposes. All nature contributes her portion. There is nothing in nature, and nothing which has inflamed ambition or avarice, but what is employed to aggrandize this subject, and to adumbrate the glories of it. If future glory is called a crown, it is "*a crown of righteousness ;*" if it is called an inheritance, it is "*an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away ;*" if it is called a river, it is "*a river of the water of life, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*" In fact, it is to be a sharer in the triumphs of Christ; and, after witnessing with Him the banishment of the wicked, to be a partner in his throne, for "*to him that overcometh, I will give to sit with me on my throne ; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.*" And if any thing can raise your expectations more, consider the fundamental fact of Christianity, with reference to what it cost the blessed Redeemer to procure these blessings. It was necessary for Him to descend from heaven, and become an inhabitant of this earth. It was necessary for Him to descend from heaven to become a partaker of our nature. It was necessary for Him to descend from heaven to be hung upon the cross. It was necessary for Him to descend from heaven to become our intercessor, that his intercession should continually succeed, and that He should present our prayers before the throne of God. Nor was Jesus Christ alone engaged in this work of redemption. It was the sole design of all the labours of the prophets. It was the sole design of all the communications of the Divine word. For this it was that the patriarchs walked with God; for this it was that the prophets underwent persecution; for this it was that they "*wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented ;*" for this it was they were sawn asunder, devoured by wild beasts, and destroyed by slow fires; and all this because they asserted the liberty of walking with God. So that, after all, if the labours of Christ had not followed the labours of the prophets, they would have been inadequate to procure these blessings; which, be it remembered, my brethren, are the only blessings worthy of our pursuit.

After setting before your view such things as these, is it possible that you should seriously determine to barter these benefits for those pleasures that are but a moment in duration? Is it possible that you should barter these things for the sordid cares of avarice? Is it possible that you should barter them for the pursuits of ambition? Is it possible that you should barter them for mere intellectual pursuits, of which the wisest in human estimation have been so fond? Yet, even in these, the seeds of disquietude are too plentifully sown. What darkness attends the pursuits of learning at every step! How narrow are the bounds of knowledge—the solution of one question producing another, and suggesting other difficulties! They who have cultivated their own minds with most success, know this too well, for they are always uneasy, and are haunted by subtle distinctions and endless gradations; but, in the pursuit of the blessings here promised, there is all that is satisfactory in certainty, all that is enchanting in hope, and all that is sweet in possession. If you ask the meanest Christian

in this assembly his opinion of them, he will say, "*Doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*"

Secondly. Consider seriously, my brethren, for this is a subject on which it is impossible to use too much reflection; it is to the want of seriousness of mind, and manly reflection, that there is any secret ridicule of these subjects; but recollect, that the blessings promised are the only ones you are *sure* of obtaining. There is an uncertainty in every other pursuit. We are continually exposed to change and disappointment in the present state; and we find that "*the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor riches to men of understanding*"—for accident sometimes directs fools to prosperity.

Those who expect to secure for themselves some worldly advantage, pursued in well-laid schemes for a distant period, may never realize their purpose; for no one can say what he will be in a year or a day, much less at any distant period of life. It is here only that God has excluded uncertainty. He has purposely mingled it in all other pursuits, for the very reason that we may not confide in them; but here is certainty, that we may glory only in the Lord. The humblest, the weakest, in this assembly—every one contrite in heart—may be assured of entering into felicity. The poorest and weakest person, who sees and feels the importance of the Divine favour, and who thirsts after spiritual blessings, may attain them; for they are the promises of Him that cannot lie—they are the true and faithful promises of God. Whether success may attend us in other pursuits depends upon a variety of natural causes; but when God has been pleased to promise us, we rest on a sure basis, He makes all things certain. And this is the case with all the promises of the gospel; for thus says the "*Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*"

Lastly. Consider the eternity of these blessings. Eternity is, my brethren, an abyss in which all our thoughts are lost; but Christianity has made us familiar with the sensations it excites. It is the peculiar object of the word of God to set before us the never-perishing things of eternity, to call us off from the fugitive vanities of time; hence it is called "*the words of this life.*" How far any thing here has any pretensions to be considered as life, and as durable, the experience of every one will testify. The more agreeable the verdure, the more transient it is found. None are so much exposed to vicissitude as persons exalted in life, for the storm blows with most fierceness on those who are the most elevated. The footing on which you stand, let me say to such, is slippery; your bodies are crumbling into dust; and "*What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*" But the happiness of heaven has been enjoyed by the patriarchs for thousands of years; yet they look forward to an eternity to come, free from anxiety or fear lest it should depart. This is the fountain of life to them. Let each of us, my brethren, secure this happiness, if we have any regard to our souls. I adjure you, by that grandeur of the soul that makes it restless everywhere else but in piety; by all that is

awful in death; by all that is serious in the approach of judgment, to secure an interest in eternity! Never imagine any thing here to be suitable to you, nor think yourselves unworthy of eternal life. From the moment you cherish these thoughts, you will begin to live indeed; and when this world is dissolved, you will have "*an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*"

Are there any persons here who feel desirous after these blessings? Do not, my friends, be discouraged. I cannot promise them in connexion with languid, transient wishes; but let your desires not be dismissed, and, however unworthy or feeble you are in yourselves, remember Jesus Christ has declared that He will not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Cherish those movements of the Spirit which you now feel. Cherish the suggestions of that inward monitor which frequently admonishes you. Let the world show you its vanities; your conscience will then remonstrate, and remind you of spiritual blessings. Cherish that conscience; for if her admonitions are to be regarded, it must be in the house of God: in the house of pleasure she is sure not to be rigid. Let me congratulate those of you, my brethren, who feel these to be the prevailing desires of your heart and of your life. Happy, happy are you, though poor in this world! This poverty of spirit enriches and ennobles you; for it brings you within the promise of our Lord, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" It matters not if the world favours you less than others: you have fewer pursuits and fewer temptations. Yes, your happiness is secure; you are safe for eternity. Neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let each of us cherish these desires, and secure the promised blessings by continuing to seek them; for the promises of salvation are made to those only who persevere and endure. "*He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.*"

LXXIV.

CHRISTIANITY THE TEST OF CHARACTER.*

LUKE, ii., 34, 35: *Simeon said, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, Feb. 3, 1828.]

IT was on the occasion of Mary's visiting the temple, to make the offering appointed by the Divine law for a mother after childbirth, that Simeon uttered these words. That offering was properly a lamb; but in cases of poverty, a pair of doves was accepted as a substitute for the costlier oblation, and the poverty of Mary

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

induced her to make the humbler offering. The text intimates that the gospel would meet with various and mingled success; it would be rejected by some, embraced by others. God permits the rejection of Christianity, as well as ensures its reception, with a view to his glory; and the purpose is marked in those words: it is "that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." In general, the present is a state of trial, adapted by God to bring into action and view the latent principles of his creatures. Christianity is the grand trial of character; its rejection evinces the evil, its reception the rectitude, of the human heart beyond all other tests. We shall briefly consider in what respects Christianity proves itself the grand test of men's dispositions.

1. It puts to the proof whether or not men love truth. All profess this; hatred of truth is too monstrous to be avowed by any. Christianity ascertains the real state of the heart in this respect: its rejection is the greatest test of hatred, its reception, of love, to truth of the most important kind. The gospel is styled the truth; Jesus Christ says that He came to bear witness to the truth, and declares that every one that is of the truth heareth his words. And the gospel is attended by sufficient evidence; to suppose it to be otherwise, is to cast a reflection upon its Divine Author. Those, then, who reject it may have merit of a speculative kind; but they fail in love to truth. God might have overwhelmed us with evidence; but He has been pleased to temper evidence with a degree of obscurity. Those that seek stumbling-blocks shall find them; those who have a guilty satisfaction in hoping that the gospel is false shall fall by their own delusions; but "My sheep," says Jesus Christ, "hear My voice." "Wisdom is justified of all her children." The apostles could see the glory of the only-begotten Son of God; the Scribes and Pharisees could not. And so it is in every age: Jesus Christ is set for the rise and fall of many.

2. The gospel is a test of men's hearts as affected with regard to God. Most profess to revere and love the Author of their being; the contrary expression is too monstrous to be admitted. But whether men do or do not love God, is best evinced by the touchstone of Christianity. For in the gospel God is far more fully manifested than in any other way; Jesus Christ is so perfect a transcript of the Divine character and perfections, that He declares, "Whoever hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me." The moral nature of God is made visible in Jesus Christ, consequently those who dislike Jesus Christ dislike God. Hence our Saviour told his enemies, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you: he that hateth Me hateth My Father also." The whole circle of creation and the whole course of providence do not exhibit the character of God with any thing like the clearness and completeness with which it is revealed in the doctrine of Christ, and especially in his atonement for sin; "for therein," as the apostle

says, "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; even the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins; to declare his righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus Christ."—Rom., iii. If any one thinks it an unwieldy and unnecessary expedient to demand such an atonement, to level the penalty on such a substitute, he betrays an awful want of due regard for the holiness and glory of the Divine Being. St. Paul thought differently when he said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ." This and all the doctrines of the gospel have such an impress of holiness, that they are a perfect test of character with regard to God.

3. In respect to humility, the gospel tries and ascertains the state of the heart. Humility towards his Maker is indispensably required of a creature, and still more of a sinner towards his Judge. The gospel brings men to the test, whether they will humble themselves or not before God. The great doctrine of justification by faith peculiarly does this. The proud and self-righteous, full of their own supposed merits or comparative innocence, disdain to sue for mercy, as "the chief of sinners." But the humble welcome the tidings of pardon without price, as the sweetest music they could hear; in the cross of Christ they see the glory of the gospel; they triumph in the riches of free grace; and in the glorious truth that "Jesus Christ is of God made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." The Jews of old stumbled at this stone of offence; they went about to establish their own righteousness; they would not submit to the righteousness of God: and there have been many such ever since. If any of you, my brethren, are ready to rise against this doctrine, it is a proof that the "thoughts of your hearts are revealed."

4. A fourth respect in which the gospel is a test of your character is, whether you are true or not to your own interest; whether you have wisdom to choose the right relief for your misery, the proper supply for your wants. For God, who knows our wants, has provided their supply in the gospel; God, who sees our misery, has pointed out our happiness there: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters! wherefore do you spend your labour for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently to Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." In the gospel, God invites us to partake of his fulness; of his beauty, by sanctification; of his felicity, by pardon and justification. On the one side all the fulness of God is offered to us, to fill the most enlarged desires of our souls; on the other hand, we are condemned, if we reject his offers, to chase shadows, to grasp phantoms, to sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The gospel includes all the perfection and all the

felicity of our nature; receive it, and you show true wisdom; refuse it, and you prove yourself in love with death!

5. Lastly, Christianity is a test of our obedience or disobedience to the will of God. If God is a Master, where is his fear? If God is a Father, where is his honour? He commands all men to honour his Son, even as they honour the Father who sent Him. Those who refuse obedience to Jesus Christ rebel against God. God accepts no obedience but what is offered through the medium of his Son, and according to the terms of the gospel; none, but that of those who live in habits of prayer, meditation, hearing his word, and a holy walk with God. Christians alone pass the time of their sojourning in the fear of God and obedience to his will.

A few words of improvement may appropriately conclude this important subject.

(1.) Wherever the gospel is propounded, it is a test of character to each individual who hears it; and whoever does not receive it, will hereafter stand confessed to God, as having "loved darkness rather than light, because his deeds were evil." "My word," says Jesus Christ, "shall judge every man at the last day."

(2.) The rejection of Christianity is entirely voluntary; it arises from the spirit of pride, the preference of falsehood, the love of sin. But where shall we look for criminality, if not in an evil mind? "This is the condemnation," and it lies in the rejection of the gospel; unbelief is decisive against the character in which it dwells.

(3.) The trial of character here is only preparatory to the last trial hereafter. Then, as the apostle assures us, "the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven in fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God;" this includes the heathen; "and on them that obey not the gospel of Christ;" this includes all insincere professors of Christianity. The remembrance of a neglected Christ will rankle in the minds of the condemned forever and ever. To reject the gospel is to turn the very mercy of God into wrath; to make the very prospect of heaven, now opened to you, the precursor of your ruin; to pervert the only remedy into a greater aggravation of your guilt! Wherever the Saviour is not set for the rise, He is set for the fall, of men. How shall any who reject Him escape, when no other name is given under heaven by which men may be saved, but the name of Jesus of Nazareth?

LXXV.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE PURSUIT OF SALVATION.*

1 Peter, iv., 17, 18: *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it begin at us first, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, July 6, 1828.]

Many of the Jews, who were dispersed over the eastern part of the Roman Empire, embraced the gospel, while the rest of their nation were its bitterest persecutors. To these Jewish converts the apostle of the circumcision writes this general epistle. In the connexion he alludes to some awful event, which he calls a "fiery trial," concerning which commentators are not quite agreed. Many suppose it to have been the destruction of Jerusalem, which, as it affected the Jews, was a calamity unexampled in all history. Against this supposition, however, there is this powerful objection: that the fall of Jerusalem, instead of a calamity, would be a sort of relief and salvation to the Christians; it would be the fall of their greatest enemies. The apostle probably refers, not either to this or any other single event, but to a series of persecutions that would arise against the Christian Church. He prepares his brethren to expect persecution; and on this expectation he founds a very solemn suggestion. God was about to visit his own people with severe trials; what, then, would be the doom of his and their enemies?

We shall consider, first, the manner in which God has treated his people in every age, and more especially in the early times of Christianity; and, secondly, the inference drawn by the apostle, "What shall be the end of those that obey not the gospel? where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

I. In the first place, we observe that the conduct of God to his Church is such, that "judgment" may be said to "begin at the house of God," and "the righteous" to be "scarcely saved." The latter expression does not imply that their salvation is in any respect incomplete; it gives no countenance whatever to the doctrine of an intermediate state of purgatory, which the Roman Catholics have pretended to found upon it: every part of Scripture conveys the idea of a consummate felicity reserved for the saints after death, attended with no other imperfection than the delay of the body being reunited to the spirit in a glorified state at the general resurrection. Purgatory is the mere invention of

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

man: every thing in Scripture confines our attention to this life as the only state of trial, and leads to the belief that "as the tree falls, it lies." The prospect of a purgatory must have a bad effect on the mind, inducing a timid, wavering religion. When Peter says that "the righteous is scarcely saved," he means that his salvation is wrought with difficulty and trial; this appears from the following considerations:

1. The Church is here often subject to persecution. This was especially the case with the primitive Christians: they were not only spoiled of their goods, they were often martyred; they endured what was literally "a fiery trial." Discredit and reproach were the lightest part of their sufferings. Through the mercy of God to his Church, persecution of this kind is now for the most part unknown. But something similar must ever be experienced. He that is after the flesh will persecute him that is after the Spirit; the seed of the wicked one will hate the seed of God. Recollect the trials of many distinguished saints: of Job; of Jacab; of David, who, as the type of Christ, found it hard to make his way to the promised kingdom. And still God's people are in general an afflicted people; whoever may enjoy an unruffled flow of prosperity, it is not their portion under the sun.

2. The Christian life is a painful course of exertion and warfare. A series of efforts is required: "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity;" and then, and then only, "an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Christians must labour before they rest; they must patiently continue in well doing; take up their cross daily; crucify the flesh; pluck out a right eye that offends. The apostle kept under his body, lest, having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway. He reminded his brethren, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin;" signifying that they were to be always "striving against sin," until it were subdued. "Whether we be afflicted," he says, "it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual" (that is, as it should be rendered, which is wrought out, effected), "by the endurance of the same sufferings."—2 Corinthians, i., 6.

3. Many serious apprehensions and fears are felt by the people of God respecting their final salvation. Those who never knew a doubt as to the end of their course, are far from being in a safe state for eternity. It is not so with Christians. With such it is an anxious inquiry, "Am I in the way to God? what law am I serving? what proof do I possess that I belong to those whom the Scripture distinguishes as the righteous?" When they have been led astray by any occasion of sin, it is not without much sorrow and searching of heart that they return to their former way, and it is often long before they regain a calm and settled state. Men that live at large know nothing of all this; but pious

men have done much business in these deep waters; and thus they are saved with fear and doubt. And, once more,

4. "The righteous is scarcely saved," as, to be saved, he must endure to the end. "We are then made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." When one asked our Lord, "Are there few that be saved?" his answer was, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." "Be thou faithful unto death," He gave it as one of his charges to the churches, "and I will give thee the crown of life." The Christian sometimes asks after those who did run well, and finds them no more among the saints; they endured for a while, and then fell away. True religion is of an enduring nature; it sustains the assay of temptation, the fiery trial; and is found to issue in glory at the appearance of Jesus Christ.

II. We proceed to the solemn inquiry, which the apostle infers from such conduct of the Lord towards his servants, "What shall be the end of those who obey not his gospel? where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear, if judgment begin at the house of God, if the righteous be scarcely saved?" "The house of God," you are aware, is his Church; and "the righteous" is one that is justified, sanctified, and made an heir of heaven, a favourite of God, numbered among his jewels.

1. Now if these require such a process of afflictive correction and purification, what shall be the doom of those who experience none; those who live without God; who have no share of his paternal care and discipline—none such as does them good? The end of all his corrections to his people is to make them partakers of his holiness: what, then, shall be the fate of those who considered their afflictions as springing from the dust, and not as sent by God? If his corrective dealings were so severe, what will be his severity when justice alone, without mercy, shall preside?

2. The saints are prepared for glory by a course of privations and endurances; by learning to deny themselves: what, then, may be expected by those who never aimed at following the will of God as their rule? those that live at large after the desires of the flesh and the mind, and say, in effect, of Christ, "We will not have this man to rule over us?" Much as many of the saints endured, it will not appear that they were too patient, too laborious for such a prize; what, then, shall be thought of those who made no exertions, submitted to no sacrifices?

3. If the righteous had so many fears and anxieties regarding their state, what, then, shall be the portion of those who had no such fears, those who never had a thought or a feeling of the kind, those who lived in a reckless disregard of all that is most serious? But the saints knew that such "an exceeding weight of glory" would overpay all their anxieties concerning its attainment.

4. And, once more, the followers of Christ, in the midst of all their difficulties, endure to the end. But if thus only are they saved, what shall be the doom of those who persevered in an opposite path, acquiring only, at every step which they advanced, fresh degrees of obduration, a more fixed habit of resistance to the will of God? "Where shall they appear?" This, as you perceive, is a more piercing expression than a direct declaration could have been; no description, however laboured, could prove so penetrating and awakening as this brief interrogation: it is a silence more expressive than the most alarming description.

The soul, you are aware, survives after death. There is that in man which sustains the stroke of dissolution, escapes uninjured from the ruins of its tabernacle, and becomes, probably with very enlarged capacities, the inhabitant of another state, where it retains its former principles fixed and unalterable, and "he that is unholy, and he that is filthy, must be filthy and unholy still." It returns to God; but how does it return? Does it go to Him as a Father, engage his smile, and mingle with himself as a portion of its own congenial element? Having once ascended to his presence, it never more contemplates that presence but with anguish and dread! How awful must it be, in a state where all the blandishments of sense are removed, all that dimmed the view of faith withdrawn, to sustain the blaze of that omniscient Eye! This takes place at death; but how still more awful must be the situation of the guilty spirit, reunited to its body at the resurrection, at the day of judgment, "when the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the sea gives up its dead, and death and hell give up their dead, and all must appear to be judged according to their works!" Will Christ, the Judge, admit those who disobeyed Him, those who despised his authority and grace, to be the associates of those who fought the good fight of his friends? You read their sentence, already written upon the condemning conscience, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels! Ye rejected My warnings, and now they must be fulfilled." How dreadful, as they sink into the gulf of perdition, to think that their ruin was self-procured, self-wrought! that they might, but for their own impenitence, have now been among the blessed!

Do you believe these things? Let none persist any longer in the neglect of the salvation offered! Save yourselves from a rebellious generation! Come out and be separate from a world that lieth in wickedness, that is devoted to destruction, and you shall be made the sons and daughters of the Most High! The Lord Jesus Christ invites you to come to Him for life; the heavenly Father waits for your return; He will welcome you home; He will rejoice over you with singing; He will kill the fatted calf, and say, "This My son was dead, and is alive; was lost, and is found!" "For, as the Lord liveth, He hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent and live!"

LXXVI.

PUTTING ON CHRIST.*

ROMANS, xiii., 14: *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, April 13th, 1828.]

WHOEVER would understand Christianity in its purity and dignity, as it is exhibited by the Holy Spirit, must read the Epistles, and especially those of the Apostle Paul. He generally commences with a full statement of the great truths of the gospel, which he often, as in addressing the Romans and Hebrews, vindicates by a chain of argument; but, as holiness is the end of faith, and practice of doctrine, he closes with practical details; as in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of his Epistle to the church at Rome, which present, perhaps, the finest compendium of moral and social duties that ever appeared: and, having specified the particulars of Christian virtue, he usually sums up the whole in one short expression, and this often of a figurative kind, for the sake of a greater effect on the reader. Thus, in the text, he concentrates the substance of all that he has been saying in the two chapters which he is closing, in the compendious direction, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

In considering these words, we shall first endeavour to show what they imply, and then to enforce their meaning by a few obvious motives.

I. In the first place, we are to consider what is intended by "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ." This is a figurative expression, and one that is peculiarly appropriate to the Eastern writers. In Oriental countries, garments constituted an article of greater importance than is usual with ourselves: the finest garments were there accumulated, and preserved with the greatest care; a considerable part of Eastern wealth consisted in costly dress; and hence more frequent allusions are made to this part of the social economy than we are accustomed to use. In the sacred writings, qualities of character are often represented by a reference to clothing. Job says, "I put on righteousness as a robe." In Isaiah, the Messiah is introduced as "clad with zeal as with a cloak." In the New Testament the same figure recurs, when our Lord represents the accepted character of a believer by the wedding garment of a guest; when Peter exhorts us to be "clothed with humility;" and Paul, to "put on the whole armour of God;" to "put on the armour of light;" and, in the text, to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." As if he had said, Cultivate the principles and practices of his religion, not for an occasion, but for a constancy; invest yourselves with the spirit and conduct of the gospel; as men wear

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

their garments daily, and never entirely lay them aside ; that you may visibly appear as the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Now there are three ways in which we may visibly act as his disciples :

1. We put on Christ when we make an open profession of his name. It is not enough to believe, without a profession of our faith. If we retain our faith in our own breasts, it becomes of no avail to others. Latent faith, however sincere, faith that goes not forth beyond our own consciousness, can at the best only edify its possessor. But the Church is intended to be the light of the world ; and Christians, by their consistent profession of their principles, are to leaven the whole mass of society. Profession, as well as faith, is an indispensable requisite to every Christian ; and whoever conceals his religion must expect the consequence, as announced in such words as these : " Whoso is ashamed of Me and of My words, of him will I be ashamed before the Father and the angels :" as, on the opposite side, " Whoso confesses Me before men, him will I confess before God."

The first fruit of faith, in a person that is converted, is a desire to glorify the Lord by our profession and example, to separate himself from the irreligious world, and to come into a sacred alliance with the people of God. There may be some peculiar cases where persons, though sincere, think it their duty to withdraw from an open profession, or an association of themselves with serious Christians : but, in all such cases, great care is required, lest a real recoiling from the reproach of the world, or a voluntary humility, be concealed under the pretended reason ; and let it be considered what would be the consequence if such a conduct were admitted universally. There would be no such thing as religious profession, or, indeed, as religion itself, in the world ! Did the martyrs and confessors act thus ? and shall we, who are called on only for a sacrifice that comparatively costs us nothing, shall we suppose ourselves justified in retiring from the view of the world in our Christian character ? No, my brethren, you can never rescue yourselves from the suspicion of some improper feeling, unless you are ready to go forth after Christ without the camp, bearing, if you must, his reproach.

2. We put on Christ by cultivating an acquaintance with the doctrines, imbuing our minds with the spirit and sentiments, of the gospel. All the doctrines of Christianity are intended to reform and purify the heart, to expel its native corruption, and raise us nearer and nearer to the character and will of God. We cannot, then, put on Christ, without the serious perusal of those Scriptures which reveal the Divine character and will. We must learn to estimate all things by that standard, to condemn whatever the Scriptures condemn, and pursue whatever they commend. The spirit of the world is at variance with the mind of God ; and the truth of God is sent forth in order to counteract the evils arising from the spirit of the world. He who imbues his mind with the word of Christ is enabled to go contrary to the course and maxims of an evil world.

Set yourselves, my dear brethren, to have your minds inlaid with the principles, to imbibe and exhibit the spirit and temper, which the gospel prescribes; and especially fix your contemplation habitually on the cross of Christ! There you may see that which at once lays low and elevates you; divests you of pride, and spiritualizes your carnal mind; you may there find a disenchanting influence, which will crucify the world and your heart to each other; an influence which nothing besides can supply: for, as the apostle demands, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth in Jesus Christ?" "This is the victory, even our faith." In the doctrine of Christ crucified, you may furnish yourself with a sword of ethereal temper, a Divine panoply, sufficient to give you the advantage against all spiritual enemies. We must not receive Christianity as a system of mere speculations; we must aim, in all we know, to know it more spiritually; in all we feel, to feel it more deeply; in all we do, to do it more humbly; in a word, we must yield ourselves to be cast in the mould and fashion of the gospel.

3. And, especially, we put on Christ when we imitate his example. Other models are imperfect, and unsafe for universal imitation: but the example of Christ challenges our entire pursuit: we may abandon ourselves unreservedly to this standard; in Him there is not a shade of imperfection. Besides, it is presented for this very purpose. One great end of his obedience unto death was that He might leave us an example whose steps we might follow: his sacrifice for sin might have been accomplished in a very short time; but He suffered also as a pattern of submission to the will of God. We are called to imitate no lower a standard than the character of God himself: but God is withdrawn from our view: it was necessary that God should be, as it were, imbodied in Christ: the best way to study the Divine character is to behold it in the face of Christ: we may there see God incarnate, tabernacling among us as our neighbour; for Christ is identified in character with the Father, so that he who has seen the one, is said, in his own words, to have seen the other.

In order to obey the will of God, therefore, you cannot adopt any method so simple and sure as to inquire, "How can I this day act in a manner most consonant to the mind of Christ? What can I do most suitable to one who has one pattern, one Master, even Christ? Was I not baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and especially named a Christian after the name of Christ?" Alas! how many never once think of this, but yield themselves to all the propensities of nature, as much as if they had never been taught that the only thing which can make us lovely in the eye of the Deity is likeness to the Son of God; without which likeness we can have no place in his presence, but are condemned to hear the sentence of eternal exclusion, "Depart, ye cursed, I never knew you; depart, ye workers of iniquity!"

We must make our religion, my brethren, the business of every day of our lives: we must not suppose it confined to one day in the seven, much less to the services of that day: we meet here, not to do all

that we have to do as Christians, but rather to learn how we ought to conduct ourselves on all other occasions. Religion is to become a habit of the mind and life; a new nature, operating with the steadiness of the old nature; influencing us in every situation; in health and sickness, in society and solitude, in prosperity and adversity, in life and death.

II. It remains, as the second part, to mention briefly one or two motives which may be urged for our "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ."

1. The first is, that Christ may be glorified by us. If we love Him who died for us, we shall desire to do what we can to glorify Him: but what can tend so much to his glory, as to let men see the efficacy of his doctrine on the character and condition of those who receive it? What can be so calculated to counteract infidelity? Nothing can be so suitable to convince men that there is a Saviour, as to see men saved from their sins by their alliance with Him. "Abide in Me," He said, "and I will abide in you; every branch that abides in Me brings forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing: and herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." To see the purity and majesty of Christian holiness investing the character, this will be the best argument that can be used to convince and attract unbelievers. Otherwise, if we neglect Christian duty, Christ is made to appear the minister of sin.

2. A second motive why we should put on Christ is, that we may experience religious peace and joy, by making it clear to ourselves that we belong to Him. He that lives to the glory of God will be at no loss whose he is and whom he serves. Every thing tends to clear his prospect, prove his adoption, and brighten his hours, like the light that shines to the perfect day. You never knew a person, however depressed by poverty or sickness, who, if he sincerely served the Lord, was not happy: he had a secret spring of peace of which the world knew nothing, and which he would not have parted with for all its joys! It is only the path of transgressors that is hard; the path of wisdom is the path of peace. "Come unto Me," says Christ, himself this wisdom, "and I will give you rest; take My yoke, it is an easy yoke." Men are made wretched by a partial reception of truth, sufficient to disturb their conscience, while it fails to engage their affections; they remain divided between two masters: but make the service of the Lord your chief concern, and no doubts shall long remain to distress your mind.

3. To put on the Lord Jesus Christ is the best and only preparation for a dying hour, and for the solemn scenes beyond. This is to put on the wedding garment; the want of this, in the day when the King comes in to see the guests, will leave a man speechless! Why did he act thus? he need not have been left thus unprepared. But he that serves the Lord will hear the joyful welcome, given before God and angels to every good and faithful servant; he will rest from his labours, and his works will follow him; he will enter into peace, and see, face to face, Him whom, not having seen, he loved.

And what a Divine wisdom will then appear to have been his who served God in the world; and who will hear the voice, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit on My throne!" he shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and enjoy an eternal repose; he shall look back on the seed sown in life, and forward to a perspective of endless joy.

They only who here, by the obedience of faith, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," shall hereafter put on the likeness of his incorruption and glory: they who have been clothed here with humility and meekness, with purity and love, shall be clothed, ere long, with the white robe of victory over sin, sorrow, and death. Having previously put on Christ in the humble resemblance of his human character, they shall put on Christ in the glorified resemblance of his Divine condition. What a prospect to animate our hope and confirm our obedience! Let us sow to the Spirit now; and in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Instead of halting between two opinions, let us act a manly and decided part: we have nothing to endure but what religion will enable us to welcome, and what will prove for our ultimate benefit if we love the Lord. Let us cheerfully go forth without the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ; "for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one that is to come."

LXXVII.

REPROACH INCURRED BY CHRISTIANS.*

HEBREWS, xiii., 13: *Bearing his reproach.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday morning, March 5, 1829, previously to the administration of Christian baptism.]

AMONG the evils of the present state, one, and that not the least trying, is unmerited reproach. The very circumstance of reproach being unmerited, seems to render it peculiarly hard to bear: yet this is, in reality, a great relief; for who cannot better endure reproach when it is not deserved, than when it is justly inflicted? It is never so intolerable as when aggravated by an accusing conscience; never so tolerable as when he who suffers it is supported by the inward monitor, and by the approbation of that God whose vicegerent conscience is. "Let no man," says Peter, "suffer as an evildoer; but if any man suffer as a Christian, let him rejoice; for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon him." Jesus Christ himself was the greatest object of unmerited reproach that ever appeared on the earth.

The following are the chief grounds on which the first Christians were called to bear reproach, and on which we also may be called to bear the same.

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

1. They suffered reproach, as being followers of a crucified Saviour. The apostle alludes to this in the words connected with the text. It was appointed under the law that, when the victim offered in sacrifice had been slain, the blood should be brought into the sanctuary by the high-priest, and sprinkled upon the altar, but the body burned without the camp of Israel: and, in analogy with this typical sin-offering, Jesus Christ was crucified without the walls of Jerusalem; as though He had been too impure to suffer within that holy city, which was regarded as, what the ancient camp of Israel had been, "the camp" of the saints, the chosen abode of God. Hence it was a signal proof of fortitude in the primitive Christians to follow such a Master, to glory in his cross. Nothing could appear more shocking to the pride of nature than reliance on a crucified man for eternal salvation! but this they professed: and we must be ready to sustain the same profession and the same reproach; if we have not learned this lesson, we have not acquired the first elements of Christian knowledge.

2. A second ground of the reproach suffered by the first Christians was, that they forsook the ways of an evil world. This is implied in the words, "Bearing his reproach:" He was not of the world, as He declared, and therefore the world hated Him; and those who followed Him, followed Him in this; they went forth after Him, and left the world behind, not by a local retirement, but in the spirit of their mind and example. They were not conformed to the world in its prevailing maxims and passions: in things indifferent, indeed, they affected no singularity; on the contrary, the apostle who wrote the text "became all things to all men," so far as conscience and usefulness required. But in all serious respects, they renounced the world for Christ; they were "buried with Him in baptism," as dead to the world; they had no fellowship with the works of darkness, except to reprove them. Men of the world often censure Christians as singular; they think it strange if ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, "speaking evil of you." There are various amusements, approved of by the world, which, in my opinion, are incompatible with piety: such are the theatre, games of hazard, all conversation that conveys by insinuation and "double intendre" improper ideas, all irreverent mention of sacred subjects. All this is hostile to the seriousness and composure of mind required by religion: therefore, "come out from among them, and be separate!"

3. Christians are reproached by many on account of their general seriousness and spirituality of character. This the world cannot pardon. Nothing gives more offence to worldly persons than being in earnest in religion, living for God and eternity: they feel it a reflection upon their own conduct: as Noah, by building the ark, condemned the world. Let a person be evidently serious here, and those who differ on every other point will often concur in condemning him. Yet this is as unreasonable as it is unchristian: for, in every other pursuit, fervour and enthusiasm is admired; in science, in poetry, in war; it is only in religion that it is condemned. It is true, there may be such a thing as fanaticism; and let this be condemned as folly;

but that real earnestness should be ridiculed in such a cause, is a proof of infatuation, as well as aversion to godliness; it is a want of consequential reasoning, as well as of a pious spirit. The things of God are either true or not; if they are not true, let them be consigned to utter neglect; but if, as it is allowed, they are true, they must be deserving of our most serious regard; and those only are inconsistent and irrational who profess to believe these things, and yet are cold towards God and eternity, and immersed in the things of the present world! You, my dear friends, will go forth, I trust, with a different mind, and be ready to say with David, when reproached for his zeal in the service of God, "If this be vile, I will be yet more vile." Remember that Jesus Christ himself, with all the sober wisdom of his conduct, did not escape this reproach: He was said to be mad, to be possessed; the same was said of Paul; he was called "beside himself, and mad;" and the same has been often said of pious persons.

4. Lastly: those who adopt any peculiar mode of religious observance, have been at times exposed to ridicule on that account. This kind of trial is, I believe, diminishing, and a better spirit taking its place; yet there are still some good men, and especially the unthinking multitude, who will express a degree of ridicule for modes of religious worship differing from their own. This remark applies to the mode of baptism which we adopt. Baptism is regarded by us as a solemn mode of expressing repentance and faith; because Jesus Christ commanded the apostles first to go and teach, or disciple, all nations, and then to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit: conformably with which order of things He added the declaration, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved;" while his apostles gave the charge, "Repent and be baptized;" and represented baptism as designed to express "the answer of a good conscience towards God." Hence, as we infer, none can be made disciples without their own deliberate avowal of repentance and faith.

And then, with respect to the mode which we prefer, that of immersion, none will contend that this was not the primitive mode. This latter point is much clearer than the former; and yet, strange to say, the ridicule has been directed principally against the mode; the point which, in a positive institution, is most important to be observed, and which, in the case before us, is so clearly according to primitive usage, that *Wall*, the most approved advocate of pædo-baptism, allows immersion to be the original practice, and only pleads for the lawfulness of sprinkling; while *Whitby*, the celebrated expositor, wishes that the primitive mode of immersion were restored.

To close this brief address with a word of exhortation.

Be content to go forth bearing the reproach of Jesus Christ. It is his reproach, as that which He bore; and, if you bear the same, as being his follower, as one that forsakes a worldly course, as one whose mind and walk are marked by spirituality, you are the honoured partaker of the reproach which the Son of God endured.

In the next place, it is incurred for his name. "Happy are ye

when men shall revile you for My sake; rejoice in that day! for great is your reward in heaven!" Great reward is laid up for those who bear reproach in his service; that reproach will turn into a crown of glory; at the resurrection of the just, they will emerge into the new heavens and earth, touched with a divine radiance, and welcomed with the applause of God! "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before the angels of God." But those who refuse to bear his reproach must give an account to a greater than us; they will be alarmed at his voice, and abased at his presence. As those who gave but a cup of cold water for the sake of Christ, did it to himself; so those who reproached his servants, will be treated by Him as having reproached himself!

And, for your encouragement, remember, my brethren, that here we have no continuing city; what is reproach to a passing stranger? Despise the reproach of a world which you will shortly quit; a world which knew not the Lord of glory! receive it with unspeakable calmness; as if "no new thing happened to you!" You share it with the Lord Jesus Christ; and, when He shall appear, you shall appear with Him, and be glad with exceeding glory!

LXXVIII.

THE REFUGE OF CHRISTIANS.*

HEBREWS, vi., 17, 18: *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.*

[Preached at Bristol, February 24, 1828.]

THE peculiar situation in which the first Christian converts of the Jewish nation were placed, and the danger of apostacy to which they were exposed, occasioned this Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews. Being surrounded by the Gentile nations that despised them, and having crucified the Lord Jesus, they were treated, both by pagans and Jews, with scorn, contempt, and persecution. This epistle, therefore, was written in order to fortify them against the scoffs and the more violent assaults of their enemies, by teaching them that many of the great truths of religion, which were founded in the Jewish, were more clearly revealed in the Christian economy. His endeavour was to cheer their minds in the midst of their trials, and to animate them to activity, by holding up and exhibiting the promises of the gospel: "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises; for when God made promise

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself;" intimating to believers that they should be the inheritors of eternal life, as the reward of their perseverance. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation." This, then, is the character of the people of God; they are here represented as having fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them, and such only are the heirs of the promises made to Abraham. We shall consider,

1st. That Christians are heirs of the promises.

2dly. The immutability of God's promises.

3dly. The strong consolation which these promises afford as the privilege of true Christians.

First. Christians are described as having fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them, and have thus become the heirs of the promises. We shall contemplate this subject in an inverted order, that you may see, my brethren, how far your conduct and experience coincides with this description; that if you have, on Scriptural principles, thus fled for refuge, you may infer that you are heirs of the promises.

We find in the Jewish economy, that there were six cities of refuge appointed for the manslayer, for him who had slain a brother or a kinsman without *malice prepense*, and if he arrived there before the avenger of blood overtook him, he was safe. A council was then to be held, and if the manslayer was found to have committed the act in malice, he was capitally convicted, and afterward executed; but if he was proved to be innocent of a malicious intention, he was to be confined to the city in which he had taken refuge, until the death of the Jewish high-priest. This was designed, my brethren, to shadow out the condition and apprehension of the penitent sinner under the gospel dispensation; that as the death of the high-priest was to release the manslayer, so it was typical of Divine grace, provided as the refuge of sinners by the death of Christ, our great High-Priest and Deliverer. To illustrate this application of the subject, we must remember that six of these cities were appointed, in different parts of Judea, as places of refuge, and way-marks, or posts, leading to them were set up, that the direct road might be well known. You may conceive with what earnestness such persons would flee for their lives from the pursuit of the "avenger of blood," and with what eagerness they would speed their way to secure an entrance into one of the nearest of these cities before they were overtaken.

This was the hope set before the manslayer, and you may readily suppose that he never would relax his exertions, or be diverted from his purpose, till he had reached his resting place of refuge. We are all, my dear brethren, in this condition, as sinners against God, and are exposed to his righteous indignation. We are "children of wrath, even as others," and it is owing to the merciful provision of God that we have any way of escape. This we have through the death of his

Son, who became, by the Divine purpose, a propitiation for the sins of the world, that whosoever believes, and flees to Him for refuge, may plead his merits, and feel the efficacy of his pardoning blood, and escape the stroke of Divine justice. He was raised from the dead as a complete attestation of his divinity, and a satisfactory evidence that God had accepted the sacrifice He had made of himself on the cross for sinners; we must, therefore, direct our minds to Christ, and make Him our only hope and refuge. Among various instances of faith in the new covenant dispensation, there is none more evident than this, a coming to God by Christ: "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." It is placing on Him our great concern, the salvation of our souls, by which we escape the judgment and indignation of a righteous God. We may have many fears when first awakened to a sense of our danger. We may have great terrors and apprehensions lest we should faint, and be cut off by the "avenger of blood," before we obtain the place of refuge. When we see persons who have no such anxiety or concern as to cause them to cry out, like the assembly on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" we cannot but conclude that they are in a very different situation to those who *have* fled, or *are fleeing* for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. Let sinners be but once quickened by the Divine Spirit, and you will see them in motion, inquiring the way to the city of refuge, "with their faces thitherward," anxious how to obtain the knowledge of Christ, and to receive the remission of sins by faith in his blood. Let me ask, my brethren, how does it stand with you? Has He become your hiding-place from the storm? Has He become your refuge from the tempest? Happy would it be could we see this to be the case with all of you; but if you are strangers to these feelings, if you have never fled for refuge, so as to make it your grand concern to be interested in the redemption which the Saviour has wrought out, we have reason to fear you have no hope, and are "without God in the world." Those who are heirs of the promises, are such as believe in the name of Jesus Christ, as "the only-begotten Son of God," and have laid hold on Him by faith, and who, thereby, become entitled to the blessing. There is a Divine constitution, there is a settled plan in the Divine government, by which sinners present their plea, not founded on any merit of their own, but on the promises of God, and they are thus justified in his sight. He justifies and acquits them as a judge; for, the ransom being paid, God has promised and engaged that whosoever turns to Him, through a Mediator, shall become entitled to the blessings of pardon and eternal life. Jesus Christ executes the great law of grace in his kingdom, according to a settled plan and course of action, so that all the purposes of the Divine administration shall tend to exalt the wisdom and glory of the Lawgiver, and the Judge, in the salvation of the sinner. The promise is to *believers*, and to these persons only is it said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." As sinners they

are justified and made heirs of God, by the promises and covenant of grace in Christ Jesus. They are so translated out of their former state of spiritual bondage, as to become entitled to pardon and felicity; for all "the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus." But, remember, the security which a true believer has in this place of refuge does not make his obligation to obedience less, as giving him a grant or certificate to sin; on the contrary, he becomes more solicitous "to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."

Secondly. We are to consider the immutability of the Divine counsel, and that it is based upon "two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie," even by his promise and his oath. The counsel of God signifies that purpose of God in giving the blessing of salvation, according to the infinite dictates of his own Divine wisdom. Men are accustomed to have recourse to counsel in great affairs of difficulty, by seeking the advice of others. In the state they are called councils of state, where more than one mind is found to be necessary; but we are not to suppose that the Divine Being is ever at a loss to need consultation with himself or others, though it is so represented, in order to give a greater solemnity to the transaction. He is pleased to condescend to swear by himself. It is said in the creation, "Let us make man in our own likeness;" and when God restores man to the image of himself, which he had lost by sin, all the powers of the Godhead, its infinite attributes of wisdom, goodness, and mercy, are employed. All are represented as in council, under the guidance of his wisdom, and with a benevolence worthy of himself, to give the purpose of his love towards the human race a greater dignity in our eyes; for in the scheme of revelation to lost man, there are greater displays of the Divine character than in any of the ways of God besides. It is said, "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." He has interposed himself with an oath, on purpose to meet the anxieties of the most distressed and afflicted mind. "For as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." And unto Abraham he said, "In multiplying I will multiply thee, and in blessing I will bless thee." The most solemn method of swearing among the Jews were these asseverations: "As I live," and "As the Lord liveth." Abraham was the father of all the faithful, who receive the grant with him of the spirit of faith, which is to all that believe in Jesus; so that they who exercise this faith become heirs of the promises made to Abraham, and heirs of God. The apostle appeals to the conscience of every Christian, in respect to the assurance of that covenant, "well ordered in all things, and sure," as that which is all their salvation and all their desire. We have the same God, we have the same provisions and stipulations of that covenant which was made with Abraham to all his spiritual seed. He pledged all that was godlike in himself, and all that is sacred in the eyes of the universe, saying, "As I live, saith the Lord, in blessing I will bless thee," viz.,

he would strip himself of his glory, if the promise were not accomplished. Not content to give us a hope of pardon, he binds himself with an oath. Knowing the diffidence of the penitent sinner, when once opposed by Satan and his own conscience, to soar to the majesty of a full faith and confidence in the Divine Being, he is pleased to use the greatest condescension, and to stoop, and, as it were, stake his life and Godhead on the fulfilment of this promise. Nothing, my brethren, but what is of the greatest consequence and magnitude, would ever have induced the great and blessed God thus to condescend; nothing but an affair of unspeakable importance, such as salvation by Jesus Christ; nothing but such a sublime subject would have led the Divine Being to have recourse to this method, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation;" and lest the "strong consolation," which every true believer is entitled to receive, should fail him, He gives his promise and his oath. In order to confirm it in a most extraordinary manner, He stakes his existence and blessedness on the fulfilment of his promise, not only as an assurance of the final salvation of the sinner, but for his present peace and comfort. As the happiness of a seeking sinner can spring only from spiritual relief, He gives him the most ample assurance, and he finds by experience he needs this strong consolation. Such are the difficulties that stand, like mountains, in his way to the attainment of a firm confidence in Christ.

When men are dead in trespasses and sins, they are lulled into a state of security. Satan's next device is to cast them into despair, and to obstruct their fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. The Divine Being is aware of this device. Let me, then, address myself to those who are distressed on account of their sins, and who have fled, or are desirous of fleeing, for refuge to lay hold on the Redeemer. There is no reason for despondency in your case, my brethren, for He says, "He that believeth on me shall have everlasting life;" and should your fears lead you to call this promise in question, He again declares, "For this is the will of Him that sent me; that every one which seeth and believeth on Him may have everlasting life;" and, again, he hath "passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation, and I will raise him up at the last day." Should the penitent sinner still doubt, He farther says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Can you, then, doubt his willingness to save you? Renounce, my brethren, every other confidence. Fall at his feet, and say, "Lord, save, or I perish!" The Divine Being has done more, He has even gone farther than this promise, He stakes his all on the issue of this contest, if we may so say, without dishonour of the Divine Majesty. Accept, then, my brethren, of his pardon, for He will sanctify and bless you, if you will come to Christ. Open your hearts, He will meet you with the smile of consolation, He will sustain you in all your temptations from whatever cause, and in all your conflicts with the wicked one. Satan may urge that it is too late, that the evening shades have set in, that the day of grace is past; but these consolations will over-

power all his suggestions. The Saviour says, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." The promise is absolute; "for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." When the Apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthians, he expresses their depravity by enumerating their vices, adding, and "such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

The apostle himself was selected, he tells us, as an example of long-suffering and forbearance—as an object of the Divine mercy—for he says, "that in me, the chief of sinners, God was determined to show all long-suffering and gentleness, for an example to them who shall hereafter believe." This strong consolation, my brethren, is admirably calculated to sustain in a dying hour, when a sinner is about to stand in his naked essence before God, and even *then* to enjoy such confidence in the Divine mercy as to be enabled to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The most serious apprehensions of death and judgment have not been able to impair this confidence; for the Church, in every age, in every scene of trouble and persecution, has stood steadfast, and even triumphant against the power of the last enemy, and there has been lighted up a sort of heaven in the hearts of believers, in the midst of the greatest sufferings, producing a joy which the world could never understand—which it could neither give nor take away. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

In conclusion, my brethren, let all those who have heard this doctrine take the consolation it is intended to afford. See to it, first, that you have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you, then cast yourselves confidently on the power and grace of Christ. Remember you cannot trust in his office of Priest alone; but in every character which He bears as a Prince and a Saviour, "to redeem you from all iniquity, and to purify you unto himself, and to present you faultless before the throne of his glory." Oh, the Divine mercy! How great is the "blessedness," as the Psalmist says, "of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." "Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him," that make "a covenant with Him by sacrifice;" "and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

LXXIX.

THE ENDURANCE OF AFFLICTIONS.*

HEBREWS, xii., 9: *Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?*"

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day morning, Feb. 25, 1827.]

THIS epistle was written to the Christian converts under affliction, when suffering persecution for the sake of Christ. There are peculiar consolations and promises addressed to such persons throughout it. As the whole Church of Christ was exposed to persecution in the first age, so that part of it which consisted of converts from the Jewish nation was peculiarly exposed to it, because the enmity of the Jews was more bitter than even that of the Gentiles against Christianity. Jewish bigotry and zeal excited all the first persecutions. This epistle was written by St. Paul, most probably, to converts of Jewish extraction; and as they were in a very peculiar and critical situation with regard to their own government, they needed all the consolations of the gospel to sustain them under such trials.

The view here given of their afflictions, and of God's designs in them, is full of instruction and comfort to the people of God. The text, together with the context, has been a cordial in the hands of the Holy Spirit to many a fainting soul in every age of the Church. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." In the words of our text there is a case supposed, the presence of affliction and trial; and the proper endurance of it is enforced, and the spirit of resignation recommended by a powerful argument taken from the relation we are in to God as the Father of our spirits.

I. A case is supposed, and the duty of patiently enduring affliction enjoined, under the notion of chastisement. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Mankind in all ages have been ingenious in inventing topics of consolation under it. But the progress in this before the coming of Christ was very slight. While the knowledge of the Divine Providence was not taught as revealed in the gospel, the mere contemplation of the state of things, and the course of events, furnished but very slender grounds of consolation, and mitigated but very little the darkness of that gloom. During this time of heathen ignorance, we have reason to think that there were very few persons who derived any substantial comfort from the topics which philosophy invented, and eloquence embellished.

But now all is known. The doctrine of the Divine Providence revealed in the Holy Scriptures is taught to mankind. We learn that all things

* From the notes of the Rev. Dr. Wilson.

are directed by God; that men are his children; and that He guides all events with a paternal hand. Thus the aspect of things is quite changed to them that obey the gospel. That one feature in the case—that trials and afflictions are chastisements, that they spring not from the dust, that they rise not from chance, nor from the passions of men, nor from creatures, except as instruments; but that they are all previously ordered, inflicted with design, measured by wisdom, controlled by power, made subservient to holiness—this one feature alters the whole case: all wears a new and different aspect.

Those who are conscious of being the children of God, enter upon afflictions in a very different spirit, and endure them in a very different manner from those who are left to the dim conjectures of nature. The Christian knows that all afflictions are corrections, chastisements, part of the paternal discipline which God exercises in his family, and distinct from those acts of justice by which He appears as the governor of the world, and the avenger of his enemies. They are not servile punishments inflicted for the pleasure of a master, and avenging an injury done to his authority, or merely to deter others from like offences; but acts of chastisement, for the express benefit of those who receive them; acts of domestic justice, that of a father towards his children.

The Israelites suffered great and various afflictions: they had provoked the anger of God; and at Tabera and at Massah the wrath of the Almighty broke out against them. And yet these afflictions are called chastisements; they were designed to remedy moral evils in the people; they were correctives. "Thou shalt consider in thine heart," says Moses, "that as a father chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee."

Even the best and holiest servants of God have been thus chastened. God saw that they were not in a state which superseded the necessity of this domestic discipline. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

Let none, when under affliction, think that they are under God's anger, so as to have lost his favour, and forfeited the complacency of their heavenly Father. We should, indeed, examine ourselves, to see if there be any reason for particular calamities, from our peculiar delinquencies in duty, or from corruptions which we have indulged; and thus we should "turn unto him that smiteth us." But we should consider our trials as springing from love, as having their origin in our imperfect state of character, as made necessary by our sins. We should consider that they are sent to subdue in us the inclinations of "the old man," and to form in us Jesus Christ, in all his features of "righteousness and true holiness." Thus the Christian regards afflictions no longer with that terror which they impress on a person not in a state of reconciliation with God, and who derives his view of events only from a general notion of the providence of God. To such persons they appear the beginning of evils, and they lead them to contemplate God more with terror and dismay than with confidence and delight. But the Christian under affliction considers that he is,

indeed, under the rebuke of a heavenly Father; but that is with a view to his benefit. He considers that God deals with him as with a son, that God is his parent, that He measures every stroke, that He sits by the furnace and assuages the flame, or increases his strength to endure it; that He superintends the whole process; and that, if patience have its perfect work, he will come out of it benefited, and, as it were, purified from dross by the furnace. Those who live in prosperity, and wealth, and success, and who are strangers to trials, may boast of their pleasures and joys. But all this is a dark mark. They are, perhaps, abandoned of God, because they have rejected the various calls of his providence and Holy Spirit. A person, however benevolent, extends not his paternal care to strangers and foreigners; but he is most peculiarly attentive to his children; he takes pains with them; he will not allow them to contract evil habits, or to follow their corruptions, though, in correcting them, he do it at the expense of their present comfort. For all in the nature of discipline crosses our natural inclinations and wishes, and is attended with uneasiness and annoyance. To endure these afflictions and crosses, in some way or other, is an effect of necessity; but to endure them as a Christian is an act of grace. The Christian, convinced of the design of God in affliction, yields himself into his hands. He says in humble prayer, "Correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." He recognises the hand of God as afflicting; he looks beyond the instruments, the injustice or unkindness of men, the impressions of the wickedness of the worst of mankind. He sees the wicked as God's instruments.

To have higher thoughts of God under his rebukes, to cherish an undiminished love of his character, to turn with penitence and resignation to the hand of him that smiteth; not to be like Israel, of whom the prophet says, "The people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts," is the genuine mark of filial grace. The child, when chastened by a parent, especially by a maternal parent, clings only the closer to that parent. Thus the Christian cleaves and clings closer, as it were, to his heavenly Father under chastisement. He does not run away to the paths of disobedience, and flee to a distance from God; but he approaches nearer to Him, and inquires the more earnestly how to please Him. This is to endure chastisement like a child, to vindicate the character of God, to understand the motives of his conduct, to advance in all things the designs of his grace.

There are some persons who would explain away all this doctrine of resignation to God under his chastisements. I once heard a sermon which went to prove that there never was such a grace as patience, in our sense of the word, but merely in the sense of bearing, from dire necessity, what God inflicts. But voluntary submission of heart to God is surely a duty, and a leading duty of the Christian. It bears the same proportion to the whole Christian character as afflictions bear to all the other events of life. All must suffer; there are valleys of humiliation as well as summits of joy; shady paths and gloomy

paths, as well as sunny and bright ones. To be without patience is to be without a material part of our defensive armour. The Apostle John, when he describes a scene of trials about to come upon the Church, calls upon Christians to prepare for it in these striking words: "Here is the patience of the saints." This grace enters into the very nature of Christianity, which is described as "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Our Lord says, defining his doctrines, "Keep the word of my patience." We are called, not only to follow the steps of a conquering Saviour, but to follow the steps also of one who died for our sins, of one who fought and wrestled with our enemies; we are called to follow a Saviour who went through the deepest gloom of darkness, who descended to the lowest parts of the earth, who "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself:" we are called to follow One who "endured the cross, despising the shame," before he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Patience, therefore, is the very badge of our Christian vocation.

But let us consider,

II. The great argument by which this proper endurance of afflictions is enforced, from the relation in which we stand to God as the Father of our spirits.

This argument is drawn from the analogy of human affairs, from the course of nature. "We have had fathers of our flesh, that corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?" This instructs us in the necessity of chastisements as Christians, who are children of a heavenly Father. In natural things, no parent ever had a child so happily moulded as to supersede the necessity of restraint and discipline. Some persons may doubt whether corporeal punishments be expedient, though God has certainly sanctioned the use of them in such a manner as to leave no doubt, generally, that they are preferable to modern refined ideas of punishment, but none can question whether restraint, coercion, chastisement in some way or other, be necessary to qualify their children for the functions of future life. In the minds of the young there is a waywardness, a perverseness, a self-will, which can be worked out of them only by discipline. Now we are, as Christians, the spiritual offspring of God. We may be sure, therefore, if God is a Father, we need a corresponding kind of discipline, free only from imperfections, and enlarged into all the designs which his character would lead us to expect.

The appeal in the passage from which the text is selected is to the common sense of mankind. "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" unless He mean to ensure his ruin, unless He would leave him to profligacy and vice! If we have had fathers of our flesh who have thus chastened us, we have admired and loved on reflection; and when we were capable of judging aright their motives and conduct, how much more, then, should we be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? If they did this, it was only for a few days; how shall we not, then, much more submit to the chastisement of our heavenly Father; we who are destined for eternity; we whose inferiority

to our Father can never be lessened; we between whom and our heavenly Father the distance is permanent, inconceivable, essential? And if we consider the glory with which this eternity is connected, and for which our heavenly Father is training us, how great, how pure, how infinite, surely we must allow that discipline must be necessary, surely we cannot expect to arrive at such felicity, except by long and severe preparatory restraint and chastisements.

The argument here divides itself into two parts:

1. The superior relation in which we stand to God above our earthly parent.

2. The infinite superiority of the character of God as the Father of spirits.

1. The superior relation is, that the one is the father of our flesh, the other the Father of spirits. Our parents were the instruments, under God, of our earthly existence, but this only so far as our flesh is concerned, only as we are corporeal creatures; but as to our spirits, God is the Father of them. For we have, besides our bodies, an inward, immaterial, thinking, immortal, never-dying substance. We have a part of our nature which bears a peculiar relation to God, which is in close affinity with Him, which contemplates truth, rejoices in goodness, looks back on the past, looks forward to the future; which penetrates by sagacity or experience the depths and mysteries of things around us, which derives its purest pleasures and deepest pains, more from the expectation of what we shall be, or the remembrance of what we have been, than from the present enjoyments or sufferings before us. While the inferior creatures derive all their happiness, so far as we can judge, from the immediate pleasures of time present, we live on the future and the past, we expatiate over a boundless scene, we stretch into eternity.

God is the Father of such a spirit as this; He breathed into us this breath of life. It is a part, as it were, of the Divine nature. And though it be not a portion of the Divinity, as the pagan philosophers taught, yet it places us, as spiritual beings, in a more intimate relation with the Father of spirits than with our earthly parents, who are the fathers of our flesh. We are related by a part of our nature, by what is spiritual, to the Father of the universe; we are connected with Deity; we have hold on immortality. God is the Father of the spirits of all flesh, says Moses. The wise man, dividing the two parts of human nature, and apportioning each to its destined place, says, "The dust returns to the dust as it was, and the spirit returns to God that gave it." The earthly tabernacle falls into dust, and mingles with the element of kindred clay; but God gave the spirit: He is the pattern, model, cause of all spirits; and to Him the spirits of the departed return, as to the source from whence they sprang.

The relation to the parents of our flesh is trivial compared with that to God. The superiority of mind over body, the eternal duration of the one, and the mouldering, frail tenure of the other, leave no comparison for a moment between them: God's right to us is greater, his concern more deep: He has an interest in us of a far higher nature

than an earthly parent. "We are also his offspring," says an apostle, quoting the pagan sage. It would be beneath the majesty of God to bend to man, if He did not see in him a capacity for intellectual and moral happiness, a rational and spiritual nature, in comparison with which all the material world is nothing. All nature is made subservient to immortal, accountable beings. We are the end and purpose for which the universe was created, because we are spirits.

We have thus two parents, a natural and a spiritual; our natural parent is the father of our flesh, our spiritual is the Father of our spirits.

Our earthly parent commonly looks chiefly to the interests of the body, except as Christian piety elevates and purifies his views; he looks to the temporal state of his children; he regards their flesh, their earthly prosperity, their health, their fame, their carriage among men. God looks to their soul, to their spiritual interests, to their salvation. The design of chastisements is to establish these spiritual interests; to remove those diseases which would destroy the soul; to extinguish those desires and lusts which, if they should prevail, would ruin us for eternity; to take away sin, which is an evil that would lead to everlasting death.

When God, then, is carrying on these his designs for purifying the spirit, shall we not kiss the rod? Shall we not rejoice that he thinks us worthy of such care? Shall we not enter into his noble design of bringing our spirits into conformity with his own?

What a glorious process is going on in all our chastisements, if we are Christians, when the Father of spirits himself thus deigns to pay attention to such inferior spirits as we are, and so to modify and order these chastisements as to make them the occasion of our rejoicing at last for evermore! "The trial of our faith is, indeed, much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire." Consider,

2. The second part of this division of the argument. The superiority of the character of that God who is thus, as we have seen, "the Father of spirits."

The fathers of our flesh are imperfect in wisdom, in goodness, in power. They are imperfect in their chastisements as to time, measure, manner. They cannot ascertain with any certainty the effects which will be produced. Thus their chastisements are often misapplied, often excessive, often lost. None can undertake to say that teaching shall teach. None but "the Father of spirits" can ensure the effect of discipline.

The Christian is to remember, then, in order to learn patience, that when he is in the hands of "the Father of spirits," that Father cannot err in his chastisements, either in time, measure, or manner. He knows the disease, he knows the fittest manner to apply the chastisement. We shall see hereafter that no portion could have been altered for the better or dispensed with. If Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Power are active in the chastisements inflicted on us, what more can we require?

Indulgent earthly parents are often capricious; and, therefore, the apostle had occasion to warn fathers not to provoke their children to wrath. They sometimes chasten their children, says he, in our text, for their own pleasure. But not so "the Father of spirits." He is tempted by no passion, He is perturbed by no emotion, so as to lose sight of what is best for us. He never corrects willingly, nor grieves the children of men but most reluctantly. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him;" and the parent is, we know, most compassionate when his discipline appears to the child most severe. The afflictions of our heavenly Father may sometimes seem severe; but He sees that no others would do. "Who knows what is good for vain man, all the days that he liveth upon the earth?" God alone knows what is good for him, what is most conducive to his real interests, and what will accomplish his object. "His ways are a great deep, and his paths are past finding out."

The apostle contrasts more particularly the end or purpose of the earthly and heavenly Parent. "They chastened us for their own pleasure, but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

The earthly parent has no other view, sometimes, in chastening, than to gratify the irritable temper which mingles often with his real love to his children. He is sometimes displeased with one party, and vents his displeasure upon another. Parents among the heathen were proverbially cruel to their infant offspring. Infanticide prevailed among all the heathen nations, even the most refined, the Greeks and Romans. This proves that you cannot safely put any creature, even a child, under the absolute disposal of human power.

But God hates nothing that He has made. He delights in the works of his own hands; and those minds which are subdued with the graces of his own Spirit, and bear his image, enjoy his peculiar favour. "The Father himself loveth you," said our Lord, "because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God." They share the complacency with which Christ is regarded: "Thou hast loved them," adds our Lord, addressing his heavenly Father, "as thou hast loved me." And the end of our spiritual Father, in all our chastisements, is to make us "partakers of his holiness." Who that knows what it is to be holy, but will rejoice in this end of the Divine discipline? To be made like to God, to be beautified with the graces of his own image, what a high and exalted design is this!

And such is the effect of his chastisements. They wean the Christian from the world, they turn his mind back to Him who made it, they take him off from self-will, they break the perverseness which clings to the fallen heart. "My soul," says the Psalmist, "is even as a weaned child," humbled within me, no longer meddling with things too high for me; quieted, calmed, composed; saying with the prophet, "What I know not, teach thou me;" "If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more."

Chastisement also quickens the spirit of prayer. This spirit always cleaves to God under affliction. Our Lord, when He was in

an agony, "prayed more earnestly." "If any be afflicted," the direction is, "let Him pray." "Out of the depths," says the afflicted Psalmist, "have I cried unto Thee, O God." "When my soul is overwhelmed within me, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." "But I give myself unto prayer," says the same sacred writer, when princes sat and spake against him.

Faith in invisible realities is also most strengthened when it is the only light that shines. When we see nothing of a present world, then the glorious realities of a future state break upon the Christian; and these become more glorious from the shade which prevails around them. He says with the prophet, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

But time reminds me to stop. I will only say in application, Remember, Christian, the privileges and duties which are before you. The time will come when you will bless God for your corrections, and will consider them the most important portion of his dealings with you. "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will have worked out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Your present sorrows will soon end; they may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning; the vision is for an appointed time; they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

Of those who are now singing in heaven their songs of triumph and joy before the throne of Christ, there is not one who did not come out of great tribulation. Remember that the trials to which piety is exposed from the contradiction of the world to the Spirit of Christ, is a part of this tribulation. As many as Christ loves, He rebukes and chastens. He seems to retire from you and hide his face; but his hand is active, and his wisdom employed still. The veil will soon be taken away, and you will see those afflictions to be the most necessary which are the most painful. Your faith, though now tried in the fire, will be found at last to praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Christ was the great type and pattern of suffering. He achieved glory by suffering; He obtained dignity by humiliation. By being made the subject of death, He obtained eternal life. We must be conformed to Him in his death. We must drink of the cup which He drank of, and be baptized with the baptism wherewith He was baptized.

If you wish for an easy life, for worldly prosperity, for indulgence and comfort, then choose the broad road; but if you choose the narrow path, you must take up your cross, you must expect to be chastened; you must be in subjection to the Father of spirits, that you may live for evermore.

LXXX.

PROPER VIEWS AND IMPROVEMENT OF AFFLICTION.*

HEBREWS, xii., 10: *But he* [*chasteneth us*] *for our profit; that we might be partakers of his holiness.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday morning, July 9, 1829, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

THE Hebrew Christians were subjected to extraordinary sufferings. The Jews, who were the chief instigators of persecution, pursued them, as apostates from the law of Moses, with peculiar hostility. The apostle arms them against their sufferings, which he teaches them to regard as designed for their benefit, and as marks of their filiation, of their adoption into the family of God.

First, we may consider the light in which affliction ought to be viewed by Christians; and, secondly, the tendency which it has to benefit us.

I. With regard to the light in which affliction ought to be viewed by Christians: it should be regarded,

1. As coming from God. It is a great mistake to ascribe our afflictions to any second causes; they spring not out of the dust; they are instruments used by God for just and wise ends. In Scripture the wicked are called "His sword, the men of his hand, the rod in his hand:" the Assyrian was "the rod in his hand" to the Jews. David looked off from Shimei to God, when he said, "Let him curse, for the Lord hath bid him curse:" he saw only the will of God accomplished in the persecution, and he bowed beneath that will. To look only at the instrument irritates unholy passions; to look at the hand of God softens us into meekness and piety under every visitation, and disposes us to say, with the Psalmist, "I was dumb, because Thou didst it."

2. In the next place, we should regard our trials as merited by our sins, and, indeed, as far less than we deserve. They are the consequence of that, of which the malignity is beyond our comprehension. We can always measure the extent of our afflictions, but never the magnitude of our sins; consequently, we must confess, on every occasion, that we are mercifully corrected. "Shall a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sin?" "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and not evil also?" We, sinners, who have not deserved good, but evil, from God!

3. Farther: we should view afflictions as the effect of fatherly wisdom and love. Other parents, even wise and tender parents, are liable to err, and to correct without cause; or they may mix

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

their own temper with the correction: "We have had fathers of our flesh, who chastened us after their own pleasure." Not so our heavenly Father: He always chastens "us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness." Recollect, our afflictions come from a Father, and He a Father of infinite tenderness: "Like as a father pitieth his children, the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." This consideration should change the aspect of affliction to the children of God: it is to be viewed, not as the effect of wrath, but as the proof of our Father's care for us, and designed to secure our happiness.

4. And, lastly, our trials should be received with a desire that his gracious design may be fulfilled in us. We should be more anxious that our afflictions should benefit us, than that they should be speedily removed from us; for they are intended to remove a far greater evil than any which they can occasion. It is, in reality, a most sparing and economical method which the Divine Being employs, when He uses these, "our light afflictions," in order to remove our sins; for sin is the great disease of our nature, which must be removed if we are to be made happy. It is far better that this disease should be expelled by the use of means, however painful, than that, by the withholding of those means, it should be increased, inflamed, and cause our destruction. We must be partakers of his holiness, that we may be of his happiness; and if it is true that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed," then are our afflictions, duly received, to be numbered among our greatest blessings! This, then, is the light, my dear brethren, in which you should accustom yourselves to view your afflictions; as commissioned by God; as merited by your sins; as the effect of perfect parental care; and with an earnest desire to derive the benefit designed in your sanctification.

II. Secondly, we may consider the tendency which affliction has to benefit us, to produce the end expressed in the words, "that we may be partakers of his holiness." This, as you must be aware from the whole tenour of Scripture, is the greatest end that can be proposed or fulfilled. There is nothing that can so much aggrandize and exalt the creature. It is to bring us by Jesus Christ into a resemblance of God; into a participation of his beauty and of his felicity! Now the way in which affliction tends to produce this great end is,

1. By giving us a just idea, giving us a practical impression of the evil of sin. Misery is the effect of sin, and only a practical sense of their connexion, only our receiving some of the wages of sin, enables us to form an adequate idea of its malignity. Plain as this awful truth may appear, we are always in danger of losing sight of it; and nothing tends more to generate such insensibility than a continued flow of prosperity. It is the wages of sin that make it appear terrible: if we were never af-

flicted on account of sin, we should soon cease to feel its evil nature. God has, therefore, connected misery with sin, and the children of God, when afflicted, are reminded of sin as the cause; while they are also led to search out their own sin in particular, and to inquire why their affliction came upon them. Thus the widow asked Elijah, "Why hast thou brought my sin to remembrance, and slain my son?" As the chastenings of a parent remind a child of his offence, so, and much more, the afflictions sent by God remind his children of their sin, and soften them to humiliation and godly sorrow. Who are those that are stout-hearted and callous in regard to sin? They are such as are lulled in the lap of indulgence; such as are saying, "To-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant." It is the rod that brings us to recollection and repentance, and thus prepares us to partake of God's holiness. It is when our prospect is clouded, when we are brought into the wilderness, and our comforts removed, that we are led to forsake sin. This is necessary to our sanctification. Putting off the old man is essential to putting on the new: before we can "learn to do well," we must "cease to do evil."

2. Affliction tends to convince us of the insufficiency of the present world. Nothing is more commonly allowed in words than this insufficiency; but, in the midst of worldly ease and pleasure, how difficult it is to feel it as we ought! When affliction comes, then we feel it. In a state of ease, we have only to exchange one object of desire for another; but when the world is impaired to us, when those we lean on are taken from us, then we must choose between despair and God; we must find comfort nowhere, or all in Him! The Christian is often observed to bear an overwhelming calamity better than the lighter afflictions of life; and the reason is this: that then, beaten off from every other support, he is driven to his Rock. In ordinary trials, we are apt to look to ourselves; in great disasters, we are compelled to go in the strength of another; the world appears a shadow, and only God remains!

Many are the lessons taught us by sufferings: many fruits of the Spirit ripen only in the deep waters of adversity; among these is,

3. Submission to the will of God. This, also, is a plain duty; none will deny it: but how is it learned? It is learned by a series of trials. Dispositions are not to be depended on, until they are settled into habits: till then, they "are like the early dew that passes away." Submission to the Divine will is acquired by degrees: at first the Christian is frequently impatient of the rod, "like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Even Christ, though the Son, learned obedience by the things which He suffered. It is by exercise and habit that affliction "worketh patience." And, while we submit, we shall taste the sweetness of submission; for "patience worketh experience, and experience hope."

The gospel of Christ is so fraught with this design, that it is called by the Apostle John "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

4. Sympathy, also, is learned in this school. Jesus Christ is represented as compassionate, and ready to succour those who are tempted; because He has been tempted also. From whom do you most expect sympathy? From those who never knew a trial? No, my brethren; they are not the persons most ready to "weep with those that weep." Those who have been themselves afflicted are best qualified to feel for others.

5. And, finally, affliction weans us from the world, and fixes our thoughts on another state. It is when our path is thorny, and our prospect clouded, that we feel ourselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and look forward with desire and hope to a better world. Heaven never appears so bright as when it is contrasted with the sorrows of earth! "These are they that came out of great tribulation!" As the weary traveller sighs for his evening rest; so it is, when he has learned to die daily, that the Christian is enabled to say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" Affliction has a powerful tendency to quicken the spirit of prayer. "Is any one afflicted?" says the Apostle James; "let him pray." "I am in trouble," says the Psalmist, "but I give myself unto prayer." And of our Saviour we read that, "being in an agony, He prayed the more earnestly."

III. From the subject thus considered,

1. Let the afflicted derive comfort. Consider your affliction, my dear brethren, as a mark of your relation to the Father of your spirits; a proof of his love and care; of his preparing you for his kingdom! He is melting you in the furnace, that you may bear his image. He values you too much not to bestow pains upon you. This is the mysterious process by which He is conducting you to heaven, and training you for its enjoyment. Be not, then, overmuch cast down! Remember the immutability of his promises; the stability of his covenant; the perpetuity of his love! "Remember the years of the right hand of the Most High!"

2. Let those who have been afflicted seriously consider what has been the effect of their trials upon themselves. If no effect has been produced, what can they expect but "sorrow upon sorrow?" What, but greater severity, since the former chastening has failed of its purpose? It is a fearful thing to have come out of the furnace hardened! to have produced none of those "fruits of righteousness," for the production of which the chastening was sent! Consider that unsanctified affliction can only be succeeded, either by final impenitence, or by greater affliction, in order to our recovery. Let us be anxious that, being made, by our trials, more patient, more spiritual, we may be found, as gold tried and purified, to praise and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ!

LXXXI.

CHRISTIAN PATIENCE.*

HEBREWS, x., 36: *Ye have need of patience.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, April 8, 1830, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

THE Hebrew Christians were suffering persecution from the Jews at the date of this epistle; the Jews regarded the Jewish converts as apostates from the law of Moses, and assailed them with malice and cruelty. We are mercifully spared such a trial. Still, the prescriptions of holy writ are never antiquated; they were written by that Spirit who foresaw the condition of Christians in every age. We shall consider,

I. The call which the Christian life makes on us for this grace of patience. The need of patience results from two things—the presence of sufferings, or the privation of blessings. Patience is exercised either in the enduring of evils, or in waiting for desired good. Both these views of patience are implied in Scripture, and in this passage. It cannot be doubted that the latter is here designed, from the connecting words, "that ye might receive the promise: for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." There are trials, besides those common to man, which are peculiar to Christians. Persecution is generally, in a degree, an appendage of the profession of Christ. "If any will live godly in Christ, he shall suffer persecution." Where there is nothing like open persecution, there will often be a diminution of respect and attention, a watchfulness for haltings, a disposition to explain away the excellences of pious persons; and, even where they are not actively opposed, they will feel the influence of this silent contempt. "Wo to you, when all speak well of you." Besides which, there are spiritual trials within, from the corruptions of the heart, which none but those who have experienced them can understand. And religion, instead of hardening the feelings, makes them more sensitive, more delicate; it gives the mind a finer edge. The Christian is the only man who must wait, even to the end, for the good which he desires; he alone is a stranger on earth, who must walk by faith, not by sight; he alone must both hope, and quietly wait, for the glory to be revealed, and must rise above the present world. This is a difficulty which only the Spirit can enable us to overcome. It is a mysterious life that we are called to live: "we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God."

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield. Another sermon, founded on the same text, printed from Mr. Hall's own notes, may be found in vol. iii. of this edition of his works, p. 154–157; but as the two sermons pursue different trains of thought, I am persuaded the reader will not regret having both placed before him.—B.

II. We proceed to notice the great advantages of patience. The patience of a Christian is a divine gift. There may be a resemblance of patience in the unconverted; but this is the work of the Spirit; a frame of mind adapted to suffering; a composure and acquiescence in what God appoints, instead of an attempt to resist and shake off the yoke. It is a very different thing to accept sufferings with the equanimity with which a good man resigns himself to the hand of God; or to bear them with a stoical stubbornness and the turbulent tossing of the ungodly man, like a fish in a net. Among the advantages of patience,

1. It lightens affliction, disarms it of half its sting. Impatience greatly adds to the momentum of affliction; but the firmness and sedateness which belong to patience prepare us to bear the pain: what, indeed, is fortitude but patience? Hence, in protracted sufferings, you never hear the righteous complain; and the reason is, that they are endowed by "the God of patience" with this precious grace. How vain is all opposite behaviour, all impatience against the Almighty! It is but to kick against the pricks, which can only render the wound more deep, the pain more intense.

2. Patience gives room for those moral effects which are designed in the affliction. A tranquil state of mind gives us an advantage for receiving the benefits of our affliction; being purified, having the unholy fires of the soul quenched, the beauties and beatitudes of the Spirit imparted. But these divine purposes are not fulfilled in a turbulent mind. There the Spirit is grieved, and retires. In the composed mind "patience has its perfect work;" we are prepared for receiving the light of God's countenance by receiving the corrections of his hand. While some are only hardened in the furnace, others come forth refined and brightened as gold.

3. Affliction, endured with patience, redounds to the glory of God. Nothing is a more practical proof of devotedness to God than submission; nothing more recognises God as the great Governor of the world than obedience to Him, as well in what He inflicts as in what He prescribes; the spirit that says, "Not My will, but Thine, be done." This is rendering a glorious homage to the greatness of the Divine character, while nature retains its property of shrinking from pain.

This is also to glorify God in the view of others. "Here," they are led to exclaim, "is the patience of the saints!" What can show the truth of religion more than the being "out of weakness made strong!" It is praise "perfected in the mouths of babes." The patience of the saints is as great a proof of grace as their purity. How this is seen in martyrs! Would you glorify God? Then cultivate patience. "We have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not rather be in subjection to the Father of our spirits, and live?"

III. I proceed to mention a few considerations adapted to strengthen this virtue.

1. Affliction is sent by God. His hand is there. "Be still, and know that I am God:" such is the voice to which the afflicted saint replies, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it." It is the will of Him whose power is felt throughout the universe; before whom angels hide their faces; who does what He pleases; to whom none can say, What doest thou? Him who giveth no account of his matters! What am I, that I should rebel against Him?

2. Consider the gracious and glorious design which God has in afflicting us. It is "for our profit;" for nothing less than this, "that we may be partakers of his holiness!" It is thus that He would refine us into his image, and fit us to shine with his saints in eternal light. These afflictions are some of his grand means of purging away our darkness, sensuality, impetuosity, pride. He that is not thus treated, is not treated as a son. This consideration has always had a great effect on the minds of good men: they knew that God was never more their Friend than when He was chastening them.

3. There are some familiar comparisons, naturally suggested to a reflecting mind, which tend to support the afflicted. One is, the comparing of our trials with those of many others among the people of God. What are ours to theirs; to those of David; Isaiah, supposed to have been sawn; Jeremiah, cast into a dungeon; or the martyrs of later times? "If these things were done in the," comparatively, "green tree, what should be done in the dry?" They "came out of great tribulation." Above all, what are ours to the sufferings of Christ? Was ever sorrow like his, when He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!"

4. Again, what are our troubles compared with our deserts? "Why should a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sin?" If we merit eternal death (and if we do not, Jesus Christ cannot be our Saviour from it), how mercifully are we afflicted! We have reason to bless God, instead of complaining.

5. Once more, what are our sufferings compared with our eternal prospects and hopes! What are all the sorrows of time! They are lost and absorbed in that immortal glory. "I reckon," says the apostle, "that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory."

6. Finally, the time is hastening on when all these afflictions will be no more. "In a little while, He that shall come will come." Soon we shall go to Him, if He does not first come to us. "It remains that we weep as if we wept not, and rejoice as though we rejoiced not;" and look forward to the day when "the redeemed shall come to Zion with everlasting joy on their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Let us often look forward to that day, and say, with the holy John, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

LXXXII.

THE PRIMITIVE MARTYRS.*

REVELATION, xii., 10: *Here is the faith and patience of the saints*

[Preached at Cambridge, December 5, 1801.]

OUR Saviour told his disciples that the time would come when they should be given up to persecution and afflictions; that they should be hated of all men, and be called before kings for his name's sake. This prediction was soon verified. Other systems have been established in the world by fraud and by conquest, but the Christian religion grew up amid persecution and death. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. Whether we consider it a part of human nature to triumph in this way, or the fulfilment of our Saviour's prediction, it forms the most instructive spectacle that can be contemplated. If we wish to know what the peculiar character of Christianity is, we must look into the conduct of the martyrs, where we shall see in what the faith and patience of the saints consist. Let us consider the subject of martyrdom: first, *As it illustrates the truth of Christianity;* and, secondly, *As it shows the spirit of it.*

I. As a strong proof of the evidence of Christianity, we may observe the great length of the persecutions that attended the promulgation of it. The first in order was that which took place under the Emperor Nero, that master-spirit of persecution, who, as Tertullian says, persecuted nothing but what was good, and that under false charges. To satisfy his cruelty, stakes were thrust through the jaws of the Christians; they were literally rolled up in garments saturated with pitch, and were set up as lamps to illuminate the city of Rome; others drew the emperor's chariot, while he tortured them. This persecution, which ceased at the death of Nero, was revived by Domitian, in whose reign the Apostle John was banished to the Isle of Patmos. It was continued, with little interruption, during the reigns of Trajan, Antoninus, and Decius, until the time of Dioclesian. There was a standing law, by which Christians were condemned to death, without a fresh decree of the Senate. The severest persecution was exercised under Dioclesian, and was more extensive and cruel than any which preceded it. It commenced with the bishops or pastors, and descended in its progress, until it comprehended all orders of men. The effect of this was a revolution, which placed a Christian emperor at the head of the world, when these proceedings entirely ceased. This illustrates the truth of Christianity; for we have no account of any religion triumphing over all others as this has done. If it had been the offspring of fanaticism, the ardour of first impressions might have been accounted for; but it is evident, from the length of time during which these

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

persecutions were carried on, together with their extreme violence, that the passions must have cooled, and retired into their usual channels. If these persecutions had been carried on with moderated severity, human fortitude might have supported the subjects of them; but there was no refinement of oppression that was not made use of to subdue their fortitude; all the springs of cruelty were called into action, and made to bear with accumulated force, in order to compel them to renounce their profession. The most lawless persons were never treated with so much barbarity. No, my brethren, primitive Christians had the same feelings and passions as other men; and could they for a moment have imagined that the miracles which were wrought for the confirmation of the truth imposed upon their senses, or that the doctrines of Christianity *traduced* their understanding, they would have yielded to the extreme violence of these persecutions. When you consider, also, that, from the very beginning, the evidences of the truth were founded on the declaration of certain facts, such as the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, which was placed in the clearest light, and on certain doctrines that rested upon this fact, it will be evident that Christianity was no romantic fancy. Persons of every character and complexion were witnesses of the miracles that were wrought during the space of nearly thirty years. Let it be remembered, too, that the struggle between Christianity and heathenism was very unequal. On the one hand, there was the pagan religion, which had every advantage of learning and antiquity, and was allied to all the institutions of the earth, and to all that was august and imposing; on the other hand, Christianity was propagated by twelve poor fishermen, unassisted by eloquence or sophistry, without rank, and without power. Under these circumstances, it seemed impossible that it should ever keep its ground, much less triumph over all opposition. It owed every thing to the evidence of its doctrines, and the interposition of Heaven. This ensured for it a victory, and rendered that victory the most sublime and extraordinary event the world ever witnessed.

II. We shall consider martyrdom, not only as it illustrates the truth of Christianity, but also its *spirit;* and as it is calculated to show what is that peculiar temper by which it is distinguished, and what the moral effect which it is intended to produce. First, it discovers the origin of Christianity; and, next, the virtues and graces of it. Whoever wishes to know what that peculiar temper is, must look at the conduct of its professors at that period, and of those who were most under the influence of its spirit. Martyrdom places a man precisely in that state and condition in which his principles alone can support him. He is a creature of his religion; and the sacrifices which he makes for it show the peculiar spirit of that holy religion which he professes. Here, then, is the faith and patience of the saints.

1. It is plain that it instilled a spirit of enduring every extremity to which its followers were exposed. It imparted the power of enduring afflictions, and a power of triumphing over them, that exceeds the ordinary measure of human fortitude. God is the God of patience; and

He, my brethren, maintained by his Spirit that virtue and grace in the heart of the Christians, which ensured them the victory. There is nothing which appears so conspicuous, in the effects produced by the Christian religion, as the power which it gives its followers to endure suffering. The world has shown far more examples of active exertion than of Christian patience and fortitude; hence, the Apostle John is said to have been a companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ; he was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

From this power of enduring, which was wisely ordained of God, a conflict arose between the world and the Church, whether the power of enduring, or the power of inflicting, should prevail. The tenderest of the female sex were not exempted from the cross in all its lingerings, the application of burning oils, of stocks for suspending them, and driving arrows into their bodies. They were exposed to the fury of wild beasts; were roasted by slow fires; their flesh was torn off by instruments made and riveted on for the purpose; and these tortures were repeated in ten thousand instances by the pagans, without any success.

I doubt not, my brethren, that, at that time, human nature was supported and raised above itself, and that God infused into the heart of his creatures a power not their own. The admission of this fact shows in a peculiar degree the spirit of Christianity, and leads us to the great cause and fountain of our salvation.

2. These martyrs possessed a superior reverence for God, united with jealousy for his honour. The contest to be decided was, whether idolatry or Christianity should prevail in the earth; it was a war in heaven between Satan and his angels, and Michael and his angels. It was required of these holy men that they should sacrifice to the idols which abounded in every province of the Roman Empire. This was considered by the Christians as a virtual renunciation of their religion; a violation of the honour and worship due only to the one living and true God. If Christians had suffered themselves to reason in this manner—that the casting of a few grains of incense upon a heathen altar was an indifferent act, and that it mattered not before whose shrine they offered sacrifice, whether it was to Jupiter or to Mars, because these were gods that existed only in the imagination of men, they would soon have compromised their profession; but Jesus Christ had manifested to them his name, and, at one view, all these deities sunk in their estimation, their ancient prejudices vanished, every thing but the fear of God fell off at the first removal of that veil of ignorance which had concealed God from his creatures. They would not, therefore, for one moment, yield any thing that was due to the prerogative of God; for it was, in their estimation, rebelling against his authority, the destruction of their hopes, and ruin for both worlds. Jesus Christ, by his sufferings upon the cross, destroyed "*principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly;*" and the same spirit will follow us, my brethren, with the same regard to the Divine honour. "*Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to*

the glory of God." It is the practical influence of this one principle that expresses the honour due to God; yea, more than this, that forms an alliance between this world and heaven.

3. There was a lively persuasion in these holy martyrs of rewards—of eternal rewards. It was not a speculative belief, but a strong practical persuasion of the truth. It was not such a belief as gave it merely a scientific basis in the mind, but it was a deep practical principle of their hearts. It was not that conviction which arises out of philosophic research, but a firm belief of immortality, animated by heavenly contemplations; a full persuasion that their treasure was above, habitually directing their views to an eternal state. They saw heaven opened; they viewed the time when the judgment which they had received here would be reversed—when they should become assessors with Jesus Christ; and, elevated by the prospect that Jesus Christ would soon come, they considered these sufferings as light afflictions, but for a moment, and not worthy to be compared with that exceeding and eternal weight of glory which should soon be revealed.

Who, my brethren, would not labour with all his might to become the friend of God? Who would not aspire after eternal honours, and aim to obtain Divine rewards, that he may carry the trophies of victory into the presence of God? This is that illustrious dedication of ourselves, whereby we shall sit with God, and become co-heirs with Jesus Christ, rejoicing with the patriarchs in the prospect of the heavenly country. This—this works patience under persecution. They *believed* in that immortality which Jesus Christ had brought to light; they looked upon this world as a strange place, this state as a state of vanity, the present scene as passing away, and that which is to come as enduring forever.

Need I ask whether the voluptuous man, or the sensual man, who trembles at the least pain, or whether he who is determined to hold all that this world can furnish, would have acted the part of these martyrs? No, my brethren! these would have been the first to offer sacrifice.

4. There was in these martyrs a strong attachment to Jesus Christ, with a sense of obligation to Him for having died for them. They looked upon Him as the Saviour of the world, and they overcame as He also overcame; not only by the word of his testimony, but by the blood of the Lamb. "*He died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.*" They considered that they had no right to dispose of themselves, because Jesus Christ had died for them; and hence the life which they lived in the flesh was a life of faith in the Son of God. Hence that willingness to suffer martyrdom, in comparison with which every thing sunk into insignificance. It was a common saying with them, *If we die with Him, we shall also live with Him.* They considered themselves as enlisting into his service. One principal reason, my brethren, that we have not more of this spirit is, that we forget the peculiarities of our holy religion, the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, and his entering into heaven for us. We should consider faith in Jesus Christ, not as merely hold-

ing a certain set of opinions upon even good ground, but we must feel the force of those sentiments by which the apostle was influenced when he said, "*I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" Some of these martyrs were even *desirous* of suffering: Ignatius rejoiced at the thought of being made a partaker in the Redeemer's sufferings, when he was about to perish by wild beasts: "Let them rush upon me, for I long to be united to Jesus." It is through the want of this spirit among professing Christians that they are not more like these holy men. When the Bishop of Antioch was called upon to revile Jesus Christ, he said, "I have served Him these sixty-eight years, and He has never forsaken me: how shall I revile Him!" And he chose to die for Him, and for that good name; for, be it remembered, it was for the name's sake of Christ. If they confessed themselves Christians, they were immediately tortured; and this means was employed to extort a falsehood, for they found no fault in them. It was a war against a name: so strictly was the prediction of Jesus Christ fulfilled: "*Ye shall be hated of all men for my* NAME'S SAKE." In the extremity of their sufferings, they declared, "I am a Christian;" and they knew well they were in the way to mansions in the skies.

Lastly, a spirit of love was another part of that profession by which they were so much distinguished. When an Indian warrior is put to the torture, he supports himself by recounting the number of actions in which he has been engaged with his enemies, the exploits which he has performed, and the retaliation and revenge which should follow his death. Nothing, certainly, is more calculated to exhaust the patience than torture; but the martyrs, in the extremity of torture, breathed out their souls in prayer, full of love for the salvation of their persecutors. They had often heard, that in Judea, Jesus Christ, in his expiring agonies, said, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" They had imbibed that spirit. This is Christianity; this is that spirit which nothing will subdue, and without a portion of which we have no part or lot in the matter.

Permit me to make two or three reflections. We may see, from this subject, how far the virtues of Christianity are the virtues of common life, and how far they are different. It has been a dispute with some persons how far they are the same; but whoever will say they are only the virtues of common life, must forget these martyrs and their sufferings, and that portion of heaven which was in their constitution. Looking continually towards God, they had all the elevation which the proudest sons of fortune could obtain, without arrogance; they had all the softness and delicacy of the female sex, without its effeminacy; they had the same sense of right, without the pride of the Stoic; in short, Christianity formed men to a spirit and temper which they never had before; so that a man, under its influence, becomes a new creature: "*old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.*"

The example of these holy men should be a reproof to the lukewarmness of many professing Christians. Can we suppose that Christianity was, in primitive times, in the same low state as at present? Were these martyrs, my brethren, to return again and see the general state of religion—the practice of some, in attending the theatre, where the name of God and the sanctity of religion are sported with—were they to see the rapacity of the rich, or the venom of party spirit which prevails, they would inquire, "Where are the traces of martyrdom? Are these the successors of those who believed the world must be renounced, and the kingdom of heaven must be taken by violence? *You* reason upon the lawfulness of amusements, until you retain every thing but your religion; *they* astonished the world with their sufferings, *you* by the portentous magnitude of your vices; *they* sought the favour of Divine Providence, and took nothing by violence but the kingdom of heaven: *you* let go immortality to secure wealth, and leave large legacies to your children or friends, at the expense of lifting up your eyes in torment in a future world." Would not these be the sentiments of primitive Christians? What remains, then, my brethren, but that we should all examine our steps? Though you do not now reach so high as they did, you may even reach still higher. Martyrdom may be considered as the expression of those principles, which are, in their spirit, obligatory and common to all Christians. If we are under the influence of the world, that spirit will lead us to renounce Christianity, if it be not done already; and if we have not renounced the love of the world, it is evident that our feet will never stand in that blessed place where they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

Let us not be slothful, but followers of them, who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises. Let us kindle our dying lamps at these heavenly fires. Jesus Christ, the great protomartyr, says, "*If any one will be my disciple, let him come after me and follow me.*" As we expect eternal happiness, let us seek it in this way, for He has led the path.

LXXXIII.

RULES AND REASONS FOR REDEEMING TIME.*

EPHESIANS, v., 16: *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, December 23, 1827.]

THE tendency of all the Christian doctrines is practical: the apostles never fail to follow up the sublime mysteries with details of active duty. In considering the text, we shall,

I. Explain the phraseology. The words express both the rule

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

and the motive. The motive, "because the days are evil," refers to that age as peculiarly marked by persecution; therefore he calls them to "redeem the time," buy it off, as the word denotes, husband it from the sword of martyrdom. The origin of this use of the word is to be found in the history of Nebuchadnezzar, who charged the diviners, when they required him to relate his dream before they should interpret it, with only wanting to gain, or to buy off, the time; the same idea with that presented in the text. So our Lord advises his disciples, when persecuted in one city, to flee to another; they were to protract life to the utmost; this is implied in the words before the text, "walk circumspectly," cautiously; "not as fools, but as wise;" the apostle expects them to show the superiority of their new principles, in the wisdom of their walk. It was requisite to give such a caution; for in that age many coveted the palm of martyrdom; but, while they were not to flinch from the necessity of declaring the truth, nor to hide their talents, neither were they to abridge the opportunity of usefulness by any unnecessary exposure of themselves. Such was the original idea of "redeeming the time," or opportunity. By a very natural enlargement of that idea, we now commonly use the word for improving the time. The use of the expression in this sense, though different from its original use, seems to be entirely derived from the passage now before us.

II. I proceed to explain what is implied in such an improvement of time as the text suggests. This may be summed up in one proposition: it is the habitual and vigorous application of our faculties to our proper business. In this proposition are two things: the proper choice of employment, and then the due application of the mind to that employment.

1. First, the end in view must be rightly chosen. Now, if we are destined for a future state of existence, all things should be made subservient to this grand end of life. Every thing unconnected with this must be considered impertinent to the just improvement of our time; nothing can be said to improve time when this is utterly forgotten; in all things we must aim to be serving and pleasing God. Let none, however, mistake the meaning of the advice; no idea of an unnatural and monastic seclusion is implied. Christianity does not materially alter the ordinary course of life, nor interfere with those social pursuits which the wise among mankind have proposed as the best calculated to benefit themselves and society. To find out, in short, what is our duty, we have only to listen to the silent monitor within; and we may, in most cases, hear a voice in the solitude of our bosoms saying, "This is the way, walk in it;" but if we once lose sight of the will of God, as it stands revealed in his word, we can never be said truly to redeem and improve our time.

2. Secondly, there is the habitual and vigorous application of our faculties to the duty of the moment.

Now there are many intrusions on time, which must be studiously guarded against and zealously excluded; among these, one of the foremost is an undisciplined imagination. Many delight in the indulgence of imagination at the expense of reason and conscience; they revel in visionary enjoyments, build castles in the air, and lose themselves in the luxury of speculative fruition. In opposition to this, you must cultivate a habit of exclusive attention to the object immediately before you, and shut out all advertency to other objects.

Next to an unbridled and vagrant imagination, there is the love of frivolous engagements; a trifling spirit, to which many are subject. Consider that life is given for a serious purpose; given that we should serve God. Recreations are perfectly allowable in their season and measure; but they should be regarded as subservient to higher pursuits, necessary to refresh and invigorate us for more important occupations; otherwise nothing manly, nothing Christian will be cultivated.

Next, there is the love of pleasure, the disposition to prefer the indulgence of inclination to the command of duty: this must be resisted and subdued, or it will gain a fatal power over us; every instance in which we yield to what allures and gratifies us, to the neglect of conscience and duty, weakens the moral character, and prepares the way for farther concessions. It is the very character of Satan's victims, that they follow pleasure in sin; and this alone explains the conduct of inveterate and abandoned profligates; they have yielded so often to the call of appetite, that at length they have lost all moral power of resistance.

Farther, avoid a disorderly manner of spending time; establish a method in your engagements; this will give simplicity and ease to the most complicated concerns. Order, in the affairs of life, is like light in the natural world; on the contrary, disorder and confusion drive a man to a state of apathy and despair respecting his duties; he is only anxious to escape from the painful reflection that must arise from the sense of perplexity in which his concerns lie. The celebrated statesman, De Witt, remarkable for transacting a world of business with seeming ease, being once asked how he got through so much, gave the simple answer, "By doing one thing at a time." Thus a man may despatch with comfort what would otherwise overwhelm him.

Lastly, guard against procrastination. All intend at some period to improve time; but they delay, and the moment never arrives. Guard against this habit being formed, lest it pass into a kind of fatal law, not to be shaken off, as the Ethiopian cannot change his skin; and the more difficult to be removed, as it is in alliance with the indolence of nature.

III. It remains that we enforce the lesson by some considerations on the value of the time to be improved; and here,

1. Consider that time is the most precious of all our posses-

sions; by far the greatest deposite we have received, in regard to what depends on its use. There is nothing in eternity but what springs out of time; all the good which eternity has in store, and all the evil, all the promises, and all the threatenings of God in Scripture, all will be realized in consequence of, and in proportion to, the improvement or abuse of the present time of our probation. Time is the seed of eternity; at the judgment the question which will decide your destiny will be no other than this, how you have used your time. And the less there remains of this precious article, the more valuable it should appear; the narrower becomes the isthmus that separates us from eternity, the more time seems to enlarge itself in moral magnitude; in a word, to squander time is to squander all.

2. Time is irrecoverable; and this is another great reason why it should be improved. Most other things are recoverable, if lost; riches may be regained by a course of persevering industry; decayed health may be restored, the faded cheek may bloom again, and the shattered nerves be strung anew; even the wounds of character may be healed, and, by a steady perseverance in amendment, those who had lost their reputation may ultimately recover it, perhaps entirely; lost time is alone utterly irrecoverable; as utterly as if it were lost in the recesses of a past eternity! And besides this, it is probable that every waste of time affects the eternal state of the individual, and renders it less elevated in bliss than it might otherwise have been.

3. Another reason for the improvement of time is, that it is imperceptible in its lapse; it steals away in silence; we know its passage only by its loss, by the succession of thoughts in our own mind; we have no means of contact with time, and feel it least of all when we trifle it away. It is like a spiritual possession. Hence men easily waste it, as they do not see it wasting away, like other things that they waste; it vanishes like thin air.

Such are some of the reasons why we should improve our time. And they are always becoming stronger; for "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed;" now the great reckoning is nearer; "it is now high time to awake out of sleep; the night is far spent, the day is at hand." The value of this world is less and less, as we must sooner lose it; the interests of eternity are not greater, indeed, in themselves, but nearer to us, and calling us, as with louder and more piercing accents, to "awake to righteousness, to arise from the dead, that Christ may give us light."

Have any here hitherto neglected God and his salvation? Remember, the visions of time will soon fade; the realities of eternity soon open; soon you must hear the voice pronouncing you either blessed or accursed; every eye must see Him! And there is yet opportunity to repair this great miscarriage; Jesus Christ even now calls you by his word to bring time into a blessed alliance with eternity. Some of you may be reminded, by gray

hairs and growing infirmities, of the urgent importance of your redeeming the time that may yet be left.

And we, who profess to be Christians, let us, also, be more awake to this duty! Let us lead more manly, by leading more Christian lives! Let us realize the end of our first, and the end of our second creation, by living to God; walk in the light of faith, not in the darkness of appetite; and copy the example of Him who crowded into three short years actions and labours of benevolence that would have adorned ages! Him who made it his meat and drink to do his Father's will, and finish his work. In a word, let us lay aside every weight, and be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; inasmuch as our labour will not be in vain in the Lord!

LXXXIV.

BROTHERLY REPROOF.*

GALATIANS, vi., 1: *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, March 22, 1829.]

THE Epistles of Paul were, for the most part, written to those Christian societies which he had been the instrument of founding in the world. Every true Christian was united to some church; for to profess to be a disciple of Christ, and to be connected with a church, was nearly one and the same thing. The practice of some Christians in the present day, of professing religion, and refusing to join themselves to a church, and to submit to the ordinances and discipline enjoined in the gospel, is one evidence of degeneracy in the Christian profession.

The union subsisting between Christians and the Church is not a mere figure, but expressive of a vital and vigorous affection, which Christians exercise towards each other. It was so in the apostolic age; and while the world was full of wars and tumults, the Church was the scene of concord, peace, and joy. But the Church was not even then perfect; and the passage before us proves it. It is solely addressed to the Church. It does not extend to all mankind, but respects members of the Church, and them alone. It exhorts them to cherish certain feelings, and to pursue a certain line of conduct, towards any one of their number who may have been suddenly surprised by some powerful temptation into the commission of sin. "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness.*"

I. Let us consider the case which the text describes.

* Reported in the Evangelist.

It supposes a Christian doing wrong, under the influence of a powerful and unexpected temptation. It therefore intimates that he would not have voluntarily yielded to sin, had he not been taken by surprise, when off his guard. "*He will not walk in the counsel of the ungodly.*" In reference to the faults which prevail among members of a Christian Church, it will generally be found that those who are guilty of them are overtaken. Their commission is not to be taken as a sample of the general state of the mind, or of the ordinary course of conduct; but as an occasional departure from the usual tenour of their lives.

There are many cases in which the best of men commit faults; but they are the exception to the rule of their life. For if a member of a church were to live in continual sin, he would be treated in a manner very different from that which is recommended in the case before us. *They* are to be cut off from the Church. But this extreme and final act of discipline is not to be extended to every deviation from the strict line of moral duty, especially under circumstances of a mitigated character; for this would destroy all confidence in the Church. It is to be applied to faults which involve great and decisive guilt; and not in any doubtful case, or in one where the commission of sin resulted in unforeseen and terrible temptation. Where this is the case, the feelings of the party will indicate who is the sufferer. To separate, for such a description of fault, one who deeply deplores it, and repents, as it were, "in dust and ashes," would be an act of cruelty inconsistent with the gospel precepts; and, instead of doing any good to the offender, might break his heart. If you read with any attention the Epistles to the Church at Corinth, you will see this view of such a case sufficiently supported.

II. Let us endeavour to ascertain the conduct to be pursued in such a case. "Ye which are spiritual, restore such a one, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

This applies not simply to such persons as are endowed with spiritual gifts, but to those Christians who are more than ordinarily devoted to religion. A spiritual man is one whom the Holy Ghost hath enlightened and changed. It does not belong to every one in the Church to assume this office. Those who are distinguished for eminent piety are to do it, for they may be employed with the greatest confidence of success. Such persons best know the importance and delicacy of the task. Nothing but a strong sense of duty would induce even *them* to take it up. Such persons in the Church ought not to shrink from the duty, however great may be the responsibility incurred; but are to endeavour to restore their brethren who may be overtaken in a fault.

To *restore* is a general term, admitting of a variety of applications. It often signifies to *amend*. In a moral sense, it means to restore the faulty person to the moral feeling which he has lost. He who thus restores becomes the healer of disease. How it is to be done is not mentioned; but the obvious end is to lead the person to confess his sin, and to express sincere sorrow for it. When this is accomplished, the office of Christian fidelity and friendship is discharged.

The principal means to be employed in such a case are affectionate expostulation and reproof.

1. *The text intimates that the reproof is to be faithfully administered.* To tell another of a fault, even if it be done in the mildest manner, constitutes reproof. Faults are not confined to practical matters, but extend also to doctrinal. Christians are exposed to both, and both are equally dangerous. Where our brethren have fallen into faults of one or both kinds, we are to endeavour to awaken them, by the application of reproof, to a sense of their danger. If it be practical, we are not to extenuate it, so as to weaken the moral impression of its wrong; nor, on the other hand, with a view of awakening apprehension in the offender's mind, are we justified in aggravating it. If there be a vindication attempted, much care and discrimination will be required to discover the spirit in which it originates; and the reprover must be armed with the sword of God, and be faithful in the discharge of his important duty.

If it be an error of doctrine, the apostle elsewhere says that a heretic is *self-condemned;* and every Christian who is familiar with the word of God will point out the error with care, and bring back the offender to the paths of truth. You at once see the delicacy of this office, and that it requires no ordinary qualifications. Hence some evade the obligation of the duty. But if we really fear God, and love our brother, we shall seek to restore him when overtaken in a fault, in the spirit recommended in the text, *considering thyself*, &c.

2. *It is to be done in the spirit of meekness.* This is eminently necessary; because we undertake to restore our brother, we assume superior ground; our conduct implies that we have avoided the fault we would reprove. This is not generally liked by those who are guilty of an offence. There is great danger of its exciting a feeling of resistance and pride. In order, therefore, to prepare the way, and to repress such feelings ere they arise, reproof should be administered in the spirit of meekness. He who inflicts pain willingly and intentionally is a monster. The skilful practitioner will probe the wound to the bottom, but he will do it as gently as possible. So we, when called to restore a faulty brother, should aim to convince him, by our conduct, that we have undertaken an unpleasant task from a *sense of duty*, and that we would rather at any time applaud than condemn.

A spirit of kindness pervaded the corrections which the Saviour so faithfully applied. Severity was employed when necessary; but in his severest admonitions, affection for the person reproved was eminently conspicuous. The apostle paved the way for rebuke by previously and frankly acknowledging the virtues of the Church. If any one undertakes to reprove another to gratify his own pride, he will expose faults in a coarse and unfeeling manner. But if his design be to do good, he will cheerfully commend virtue, and meekly, though firmly, rebuke sin. This will most effectually convince the offender that you have no other end in view but his welfare, while you discharge this Christian duty. It is one way of showing our *love* to a brother, to reprove him when he is in fault; and if it be done with affection, it will generally be crowned with success. But if we

show any other spirit—if we seek to gratify our own self-importance—if we desire to nourish our vanity and pride—we shall defeat the object we *profess* to have in view. Until we deeply feel the frailty of our own nature, and are sensible of our own deficiencies, we are not qualified for this important Christian duty.

We must never lose sight of our faults. We are equally liable to temptation. We are yet in the body; and we only stand because we are upheld by the hand of God. By remembering these things, we shall be able to approach our erring brother with feelings of tenderness and sympathy. I am fully aware of the difficulty of convincing a fellow-Christian who sins; and on this account, as well as the extreme delicacy of the task, many shrink from it. But let me impress its importance on your minds, as well as the necessity of cultivating the spirit here enforced.

It must be obvious, from what has been already said, that if we see a brother *overtaken in a fault*, and leave him, without any attempt to restore him, we are guilty of serious neglect of a known Christian duty. This will appear even more forcibly, if you consider what was enjoined under the Jewish economy. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, nor suffer his sin upon him, but rebuke him.* In this case, the people of God were united in one nation; and if it was binding on them to manifest love to each other, by reproving for faults, how much more so among the members of a Christian Church, where the union is so close and intimate! We are bound in Christ by ties of affection. Under the old dispensation, fear of God was the tie; but under the new, it is love. How can we love a brother, and see him in sin, without applying the remedies which the gospel affords for his correction!

The apostle, in Hebrews, iii., 13, exhorts to reproof daily, lest the heart be *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* Oh! who can tell how deceitful sin is? There is no being but God who is adequately aware of it. We ought, therefore, to take the earliest opportunity of rebuke, when the heart is softened by the first perception of guilt; and not to leave him until it be hardened, for then there is but little hope of success. We are, therefore, as much as in us lies, to "exhort one another daily."

In cases of physical danger, we admonish those exposed to it. Who can forbear to warn a traveller when treading on the verge of an awful precipice? If we see a fellow-creature taking poison instead of food, or pursuing a path beset with peril and danger, who can refrain from lifting up a warning voice? But in this case, how much more requisite, since the interests at stake are so momentous! It is as benevolent as it is urgent to warn and rebuke a brother in fault, because his eternal happiness is placed in jeopardy.

When you feel that it is necessary to reprove, exercise yourselves in prayer. If ever there be need to ask counsel of God, it is in this case. And in answer to prayer, He will give you the spirit of wisdom, meekness, and love. He will impart the word of instruction. Pray to Him, therefore, to enable you to discharge your duty, for He alone can bless your efforts.

LXXXV.

CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.*

MATTHEW, XXV., 31–46: *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of his glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*

[Preached at Cambridge, January 10, 1802.]

My brethren, I have set myself frequently to consider the cause of the ruin of professing Christians, and am persuaded that it does not so much arise from mistake as to the doctrines of Christianity as from a low idea of Christian morals, which appears to me to be evinced in abstaining from certain crimes and disorders through fear of the loss of character and of punishment, without reflecting on the *spirit* of that holy religion which we profess. Jesus Christ did not come, let it be remembered, to establish a mere external morality, that his followers might be screened from human laws and human justice, for human law will take care of

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

this; the holy institution of Christianity has a nobler object, that of purifying our hearts and regulating our behaviour by the love of God. In the most practical accounts of the proceedings of the last day given in the Scriptures, the excellence which is represented as being a criterion and distinguishing feature of the disciples of Christ, and which he will acknowledge, is *Christian benevolence*—love to man manifested in the relief of the pious poor for his sake. Probably some of you may not have been much impressed with this practical part of Christian virtue; it shall be, therefore, my purpose to show,

I. The propriety of this proceeding, or why the exercise of Christian benevolence is of so much importance.

II. The mode of doing good.

I. *Why is the exercise of Christian benevolence so important?*

For the satisfaction of those who wish to enter into the spirit of this passage, and to ascertain why it is represented to be of so much importance in the opinon of our Judge; I remark,

1. Christian benevolence is the image of God, the nearest approach we can make to his likeness. Jesus Christ represents it as the imitation of God: "*That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.*" Accordingly, the Apostle John has given us a most sublime description of the love of God, when he says, "*God is love.*" Love is not so much an attribute of his nature, as his very essence, the spirit of himself. All the measures of his government originate in no other rules than such as an enlightened love would dictate; and "*he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.*" We cannot enter largely into this idea, but we have here sufficient evidence to show that love is so much the image of God, that we may make the nearest approaches to Him by its practice. If we consider his nature, his absolute independence, his perfect happiness as infinite in himself, He can have no other motive in giving life than to impart that happiness to his creatures. For this He has suffered the plenitude of his happiness to flow into thousands of channels, receiving from none, but imparting to all. Would we wish to partake of the happiness of the blessed and only Potentate? It cannot be by the indulgence of the passion of selfishness, but by imitating Him. It is this which will bring us into contact with Him.

2. Christian benevolence is not only the image of God, but is peculiarly an imitation of Christ. If we inquire what was the motive for devising the scheme of redemption, the answer is, it was love. The apostles are in ecstasies when they speak of the astonishing condescension of Christ in stooping from the throne of glory, in taking upon Him our nature, in dying the ignominious death of the cross, and rising for our benefit. Nor is this perfection the least conspicuous in the whole character of the

life of Christ, which plainly shows benevolence to be the spring of all. He went about doing good, not as an occasional exercise, but as his employment. It was *the one thing* which He did. Read his life, and you will find that healing the sick, curing diseases, casting out devils, wiping away the tears of sorrow and affliction —these were the constant employments of his life. Though possessed of infinite power, He never employed it in resenting or retaliating an injury. He was pre-eminently devout; and if He retired to pray, it was to receive those ardent communications of Divine love which so much distinguished Him. His was an active life; it was not the life of a solitary monk. That devotion which terminates in itself is a luxury which sometimes perverts the principles of benevolence to a pernicious purpose; but when solitude improves the character—when it raises us in the moral rank of being—when it makes us like God, and fitted to run that active career of virtue set before us in the exercise of benevolence—then it becomes the spring of obedience. This made Him a sacrifice for us; this made Him a destroyer of the enmity and hostility between God and man; this renders Him our hope and peace.

3. Christian benevolence is the distinguishing badge of the Christian profession. When Christ exhorts his disciples to love, He does it in such terms as assign the reason and the evidence of it: He says, "*A new commandment give I unto you;*" and, "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, because ye love one another.*" Our Saviour, after his resurrection, said, "*These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*" Observe, He did not say, By the power I give you of working miracles, and over the spirits, they shall know that ye are my disciples. They were to know this, not by the miracles of power, but by the miracles of charity; by disarming them of selfishness, and diffusing charity throughout their souls. The Emperor Julian particularly remarks this principle of love to each other in the Christians, which led him not only to question his own power, but to be astonished at theirs, and that this Christian grace of charity could not be infused or incorporated with the beggarly elements of heathenism. Everywhere else, selfishness and ambition, anger and revenge, have converted the world into one great mountain of prey, an aceldama of blood. It is only on *one* mount, which is Mount Zion, that peace reigns—producing deference and respect, tenderness and love for our fellow-creatures, for their body and mind. Thrown as into one common stock, we have "*all things in common;*" "*the poor rejoicing in that he is made rich, the rich in that he is made low.*" Let us rather, my brethren, recede from being called Christians, than forget the great symbol of our profession—"*love to one another.*"

4. This virtue of benevolence is the fulfilling of the law, and contains every kind of virtue that has our fellow-creatures for its object. Every other is virtually comprehended in this. "*Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not covet; thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour,*" are all beautifully comprehended in this: for "*love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*" Other virtues are only so many modes of established behaviour, liable to be disordered by circumstances; but love is abstinence from injury, affording protection to the oppressed, pity to the poor, bounty to the needy, candour and indulgence in doubtful cases. It gives sweetness in every thing that renders human nature amiable. It is that in the new man which human nature is to the old, and sends forth streams of life circulating to the remotest parts of the body. I do not ask, my brethren, what particular virtue you have, but how much are you under the influence of this? for just so much virtue we have as we have of this spirit and character. Let not any one be fearful of mistaking here, or making a system of legality, as it is called, of this virtue. I am afraid none of us abound so much in good works as to be in any danger of exhibiting them too profusely. The more we see of our defects, the more we shall feel ourselves unprofitable servants.

5. The spirit of benevolence is the spirit of heaven, that which will reign in heaven itself. There we must abandon *ourselves;* there at last commences the reign of disinterestedness; there the highest will enjoy the happiness of the lowest; the felicity of one will be the felicity of all, for we shall be one with each other; there rivalships, jealousies, and the pursuits of ambition, of separate or vested rights, will no longer be known. The happiness of heaven will not be diminished by being shared; it cannot be confined by appropriation; it will be something which every man can enjoy without injuring another, for it is the enjoyment of God himself, the best and purest of all beings.

You need not wonder that the exercise of Christian benevolence, then, is so important a bond of the Christian profession, that it has so many points of pre-eminence that it is the very spirit of the virtues, and that Jesus Christ will invite those who have it, saying, "*Come, ye children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*"

Our Saviour places the acceptance of men not upon their dispositions, but upon their actions; upon what they have done, not what they have merely believed or felt, or in any undefined state of mind. When we hear benevolence enforced, the subject is attractive and charming, and many mistake the love or admiration for the practice of it; but it must appear in active life. It is one thing to be charmed when we have no other temptation, and another thing to act in perfect conformity with the principle. It is upon their practice of benevolence that the righteous are rewarded, and the reprobation of the wicked proceeds on the neg-

lect of it. You may find many persons who are always praising it; yet it is evident, from their actions, that it does not tincture their conduct, it does not conquer their selfishness; and that which does not conquer is defeated, and must be condemned at the last day.

II. I shall now make a few observations *on the mode of doing good.* It seems as though one principal cause that so little good is accomplished is, that persons do not act upon system in their distributions of benevolence. In their own business they see the importance of such a method of proceeding; but in Christian charity they never form any plan of conduct. In fact, nothing good and great can be effected without plan; and hence, it is proper to secure the principle of charity by some system. If, for example, men intend to do good, and yet never appropriate any part of their property for the purpose, they will be surprised how little they actually accomplish. Were every person to assign some particular part of his income for the purpose, he would find himself under no temptation to withhold his charity; while, on the contrary, when a person acts only from the impulse of feeling, he is in great danger of letting selfishness swallow it up.

With regard to the mode of doing good in visiting the sick, we find it was in person: "*I was sick, and ye visited me.*" "*Pure and undefiled religion is this: to visit the fatherless and widow in their afflictions.*" I am afraid this practice is much neglected. There is often a defect in the means of doing good, from improperly bestowing it. It is necessary to exercise patience and discrimination. The Apostle James represents religion as visiting the sick and afflicted. It will solace the minds of the poor, and convince them that they are not beneath their fellow-creatures. It will be a cordial to their spirits, and keep alive the best sentiments of the heart. The practice might be recommended by contrast, for it will add pleasure to those who have the conveniences of life, and are enabled to extend relief to others in less fortunate circumstances. Appropriate, then, some part of your time. Do not say that you have no time; time is given for this purpose.

It is not necessary to say (as notice was given of our intention, last Sabbath, to make a collection for the poor this afternoon) that you will have an opportunity of doing it. You have before exercised your generosity, my friends, on similar occasions; and, if the language of the text is not sufficient to persuade you to do it now, it would be great presumption in me to say any thing. If this subject is properly attended to, it will engage your hearts in this duty. Recollect in what light it is represented to us. Jesus Christ never seemed to clothe himself in majesty and splendour but when speaking of charity. "*When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as*

a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Who are the sheep? The imitators of Christ in his benevolence. And who are the goats? Those who shut their hearts against the poor, who neglect that charity which consists in relieving them. Each of your characters is here represented. Heaven itself is open to receive you; and hell is open. Each person is represented as being surprised; each is astonished. The wicked are astonished at their crimes, the righteous at their virtues: presumption and unbelief had covered those of the one, and a veil of humility had concealed the other. "*Then shall the righteous say, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*" They were astonished to find that this acknowledgment was in consequence of their kindness to the disciples of their Lord. They were ready to think they had received a great reward in having tasted the sweets of doing good, and having enlarged the bounds of their best feelings; but Jesus Christ will take away that veil which humility had thrown over them, and say, "*Come, ye blessed of my Father . . . inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*" The wicked will express their astonishment when he will say, "*I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?*" "It is true, we did despise the sorrows of thy brethren, but we saw nothing in them but trembling limbs, decrepitude, meanness, and poverty; we saw nothing of that glorious power of thine; and how could we suppose there was any alliance with thee, the Lord of glory?" "But these," he will intimate, "were the representatives of my humiliation and sufferings; and, as the carnal Jews overlooked them in the days of my flesh, so have you in my members: '*Inasmuch as ye did it not to them, ye did it not to me. Depart, ye cursed.*'" What an astonishing change in condition is here, when all the emblems of authority and power, and splendour and greatness, and wisdom and fame, which distinguished them in this world, shall have passed away, and when nothing will remain untouched but that holiness which is the image of Christ! Oh, the blindness of the rich, when they have it in their power to relieve the disciples of their Lord!

Let those who believe in these solemn representations tremble lest they should incur this condemnation. This is not, my brethren, a theatrical display of the glory of the Son of Man; but *your*

eyes shall see and *your* ears hear. The goats and the sheep are in this assembly, and the everlasting destiny of all present will soon be determined.

We do not mean to assert that Christianity was intended to restore the order of the primeval world by making the poor rich; but that every man should consider all that he possesses as put in his power in trust, to be employed in devotedness to Christ. There must, indeed, in society, be rich and poor, high and low: these have their momentary use, but they are only like figures exhibited amid transient scenes and a passing show. How miserable is the man who repines at his situation! Miserable will be the rich, and miserable the poor, if they do not recollect that these are only temporary distinctions.

Let every one of us seriously reflect upon the solemn declarations of the text, and, whenever we contemplate a pious poor man, consider that we see an image of Christ, a temple of the Holy Ghost, who, if we neglect and despise him, will sit at last as an assessor of our destiny. Yes, before that very despised individual shall we be placed and judged. Be afraid lest you despise Christ in his image, and become numbered among those who did not know their Lord in his brethren, because they were diseased and in misery. Be apprehensive, lest by your conduct you should give occasion to Jesus to say, "*As ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me: depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*"

LXXXVI.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF GIVING.*

ACTS, XX., 35: *Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

[Preached at Marc-street, Hackney, June 24, 1827, on behalf of the Bristol Baptist College.]

THIS is part of a very affecting discourse delivered by the Apostle Paul at Miletus. Being unable to visit Ephesus, he sent thither for the elders, and took leave of them under the persuasion that they should "see his face no more." His discourse is indicative of the fervent piety which animated him; and none can read it without a conviction, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world." He shows that he was actuated in all things by the purest motives. He had shown the Ephesians, both by precept and example, "how that labouring they ought to support the weak;" and he exhorts them to "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more

* Reported in the Pulpit, vol. viii.

blessed to give than to receive." It is probable, from his calling these words to their remembrance, that he had communicated them in the course of the three years during which he had exercised his ministry among them. It is remarkable that, with the exception of what is recorded in the four Evangelists, no words of our Lord are recorded: with the exception of this solitary passage, nothing is said of the blessedness of giving above that of receiving. This may show us the great uncertainty of *tradition*, and how improper it is to depend upon it for the support of an important doctrine, when we cannot obtain *one* saying of Jesus Christ but as it is recorded. Those who build partly on Scripture and partly on tradition, build partly on a rock and partly on the sand; partly on the word of God, and partly on the word of *men*. But, not to detain you by such remarks, though we are naturally led to them, I pass on to illustrate, explain, and enforce this seeming paradox uttered by the Saviour. To say that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," may certainly be considered as a paradox. It is a principle to which men are very slow to assent, and on which very few act. Most Christians are of another mind: or, if they admit the propriety of the sentiment, they do not act under a conviction of its importance. To seize with eagerness every opportunity which presents itself *for giving*, is far from being the conduct of many who bear Christ's name. I would, therefore, assign some *reasons* why "*it is more blessed to give than to receive*." On the blessedness of *receiving* it is quite unnecessary to say a word: the wants of men lead them naturally to understand this. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" for several reasons, which I shall now adduce.

I. Every Christian will regulate his desire of happiness by its tendency to glorify God. *Nothing*, however, *tends so much to glorify God as the exercises of charity.* Men generally extol this virtue. As to the exercises of justice, they are demanded even by law; and the character of the man who is merely just will not excite admiration. But, to be charitable, which is not demanded or enforced by any human law; to bestow where there can be no prospect of return; to relieve the helpless; to rescue the oppressed; to supply the needy; and to persevere in all this without any seeming motive but the wish to do good—this is generally accounted a high branch of virtue. If we look at the most distinguished instruments of glorifying God upon earth, it will be found that they have been the most benevolent and kind. The very act of dispensing alms is a source of pleasure, and has much to excite us to it: but if we be truly the servants of Christ, we shall see that by administering to the wants of the necessitous, or by aiding institutions of kindness and benevolence, we are capable of bringing much more glory to God than in any other way. This is an evidence of our desire to glorify God, of which all men are capable of judging; and we may see from this the propriety of the motive contained in those words of our Saviour, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and *glorify your Father* which is in heaven."

II. *To give implies power and abundance.* To *receive* implies weakness and want. This shows the blessedness of giving to be greater than that of receiving. To be possessed of power, to have the means, not only of self-enjoyment, but of communicating to the enjoyment of others; to be able not only to support ourselves, but, as the apostle says, "to support them that are weak"—this may be justly regarded as a very high distinction. Nor is it wrong for persons to seek to increase this ability; to enlarge their possession of the good things of this world, that they may be able to relieve others. A moderate desire of increasing wealth is a source of industrious exertion, without which art and science would soon decay, and what is good and desirable in society would fall back into ruin. Most men desire to improve their circumstances: to indulge this desire to a certain extent is good; and to stop merely when they have acquired a sufficiency for the supply of their own wants would put an end to the various improvements in society. Industrious exertions of this description are sanctioned by the word of God: He assured the Israelites repeatedly that He would make "them plenteous in goods, and in the fruit of their cattle, and in the fruit of their ground, opening the heavens to give rain unto their land in due season;" that they should "lend, and not borrow;" be "the head, and not the tail;" be "above, and not beneath;" and that, so far from being under obligations to those around them, they should be the means of abundant benefit. On the same principle, Solomon declares that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich;" and that the man who is "diligent in his business, shall stand before kings, and not before mean men." And, on the other hand, he declares that idleness tends to want, and beggary, and rags. The man, therefore, who has the ability to *give*, has received a peculiar favour at the hand of God. He is "*blessed:*" a talent is put into his hands of the most honourable kind: he is superior in rank and station to him who is in a state of indigence. And this may well be considered as a desirable state. He who has any true nobleness of mind, would surely rather resemble the sturdy oak, which supports itself erect amid all the storms, than the parasitical plant, which creeps and clings for support to all around. The gradual increase of property, as the fruit of persevering industry, is most conducive to virtue and social order; and if he who seeks it keeps in view, at the same time, the glory of God, and does all he can to confer benefit on his fellow-creatures, he is right to indulge that desire of success which will enable him to experience the blessedness of giving. To these reasons may be added,

III. *The pleasure which results from the act of giving.* The pleasure of *receiving* is circumscribed. It consists in receiving a certain portion of money, or something else. It is a low, selfish kind of pleasure; it springs merely from physical enjoyment—from a participation of the fruits of the earth. But the pleasure of *giving* from proper principle is of a much higher order; it is far too pure, too subtile, to be enjoyed by vulgar minds. It consists of two parts. First, *the testimony of conscience:* the conviction that we are rightly employing the

gifts which God has imparted to us. It is said of the good man, that he is "satisfied from himself;" and never do we enjoy ourselves so truly as when conscious that we have contributed to the enjoyment of others. But, secondly, there is a more peculiar and specific pleasure in giving. It is *the pleasure of sympathy;* the idea of mingling in the sorrows and partaking in the joys of others. He who gives is made happy by the smile of comfort which brightens the countenance of the individual he has benefited, and by the glow of gratitude which he is sure is felt in the heart. We are so formed as to feel our connexion with those around us; and we are capable of much pleasure and delight in beholding the flowers with which we ourselves have decked the moral garden of the world. It is by far "*more* blessed to give than to receive." It resembles the blessedness of Deity, who *only* gives, and can receive nothing. Do not imagine that you do yourselves a meanness when you relieve a poor fellow-creature; no, you rise high in the scale of dignity and happiness above those who withhold. And this blessedness is independent of time or place; it may be enjoyed at the greatest distance from those whom we relieve. The future recollection of it will give us true pleasure, and cause the apostle's doctrine to be clearly understood: "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

IV. *He who gives is improving his own character;* and for this reason, "it is *more* blessed to give than to receive." We know the full amount of the gifts we bestow, in relieving want and satisfying desire; but there is a higher blessedness, of the extent of which it is not so easy to conceive. The man who gives is advancing in excellence and moral virtue. While he is doing good to others, he is doing greater good to himself. He is rising higher and higher above the disease and contagion which is spreading around in those who regard not the glory of God. He proves himself superior to those who live only for themselves. He rises above what is mean and sordid, and mingles with the most pure and holy part of the creation of God. If we wish to learn the practice of virtue with the greatest facility, there is no school equal to the exercise of benevolence. The most benevolent are the most likely to make swift advances in that holiness which is the preparation for heaven. He who is labouring, from a proper motive, to benefit those around him—who is sacrificing his time and talents to increase the welfare of his fellow-men, is approaching more rapidly to perfection than any other. Look at those who have been the greatest benefactors of their race, and you will have abundant proof of this. The Christian religion is *practical* in its tendency; it is an imitation of Him who, through his whole life, "went about doing good." The man who gives, therefore, is "more blessed" than he who receives: he is laying up for himself a portion in that world where he will no longer give, but where his vessel will be filled with glory and immortality forever.

V. *In giving we resemble God and Jesus Christ, our high pattern.* God and his eternal Son delight in giving, and it is our duty and privilege to resemble them. There is, it is true, an infinite *disparity.*

We can give nothing but what we have received; in giving, *we* merely change property, or remove it from one place to another. But God can only give; and He can create whatever is needed. *Our* gifts must necessarily be circumscribed: the liberal-minded man, the philanthropist, can visit but a very small portion of the globe by his bounty. God can do good in every place, and to an unlimited extent. *We* know not whether our gifts will be productive of good or harm; what we give may only affect the body, while the mind is left in the deepest distress. But God can give all; He can relieve the soul as well as the body; He can bestow the blessings of grace, which all need, which none can abuse, which cannot but do good. And yet, with all these deductions, it is not too much to say, that he who delights to give is a living example of the character of God. When we hear Job say, "I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him; I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame; I broke the jaws of the wicked; I plucked the spoil out of his teeth; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy;" we seem to be listening to an account of the actions of some being of a superior order; yet he was a man "of like passions" with ourselves. By continually giving, we not only prove ourselves faithful stewards of the blessings conferred upon us, but we rise to a near imitation of God; we aim to be perfect, as He is perfect who "maketh his sun to arise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." It is in this part of his character that we are called upon to imitate Him. It is after this representation of his beneficence that our Saviour says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." And what was the example which Jesus Christ placed before his followers while He was on earth? He was always giving —giving food to the hungry, health to the sick, pardon to the guilty; always aiming to bless men, by turning them from their iniquities. And from the fountain of blessedness which is ever springing up in his own mind, He has ever been blessing mankind. The more we give, the more we resemble Christ; the more fully we adorn his gospel. By this will all men know that we are his disciples. The world never knew any thing of benevolence till Jesus Christ came. Ambition, malice, deceit, and injury were well known; but true charity was never known till Christ came, "to seek and to save that which was lost." It is the duty and privilege of every Christian to go forward in the imitation of this great pattern.

VI. *Under the dispensation of grace, to give aright will be connected with an eternal reward.* Let none be surprised at this. We are told plainly, by an infallible Teacher, that "he who receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward;" and that "whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward." He said, also, "Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." We are told by an apostle, that "he that showed no mercy, shall have

judgment without mercy;" but that "blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;" and that "mercy shall rejoice over judgment." Scripture is full of the high rewards to be bestowed on the benevolent, assuring us that they who have done good shall enter into life everlasting. All this is quite consistent with the doctrine of *justification by faith*. It is certain that no gifts can be pleasing to God if presented by a man who is not justified. They are the gifts of a rebel who is under sentence of death. If a man be condemned to die as a rebel, no gifts of kindness to his fellows, no promises of future obedience can avail; they cannot change his character from that of a rebel to a faithful servant; his private virtues cannot be taken into account. Now all men are rebels against God. "By the deeds of the law can no flesh living be justified in his sight." Benevolence cannot atone for sin, nor render us acceptable to God. But if He has graciously promised to bestow pardon; if He has encouraged men to lay down the arms of their rebellion, assuring them that they may be restored to his favour, then those who are pardoned and reconciled may approach Him without fear; they may obtain the assurances of his favour, and hope for the testimony of his approbation. The Majesty of heaven may receive services from those who are thus reconciled to Him, though not from those who are still in rebellion against Him. We must first come to Him by the blood of the cross; we must receive forgiveness for our sins through faith in Christ alone; and by faith alone we must obtain renewal. Here we must begin, and when justified by faith, we may hope for acceptance, through Jesus Christ and his precious blood; God will accept our free-will offerings. The doctrines of justification by faith, and the free grace of God, are never for a moment to be lost sight of, while we enforce the performance of acts of charity. And while you bear this in mind, let me assure you that God loves to behold in you the disposition, the desire to do good. He loved it in his own Son; and when that Son offered himself up for the salvation of man, it was "an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour." God accepts this imitation of Christ at the hands of his people, not from any virtue there is in them, or in their acts, but in virtue of their union to Jesus Christ, in and through whom they will ever be blessed. The rewards which God bestows are such as could not possibly be connected with human merit; they include peace and consolation here, and perfect purity and bliss hereafter, in the vision of God. All who have aimed at usefulness on earth will hear Him say to them, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord." Oh, how unspeakable will the blessedness of *giving* appear in that day, when He will bestow upon all men according to their works! Then the righteous shall find that all their virtues have vegetated, and produced abundant fruit. They have performed these actions with a regard to the glory of God, and with an earnest desire to please Him; and then they shall find that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

I would *apply* this doctrine very briefly, by simply exhorting those

who hear me to act on this principle, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." He who said this will make it plainly out in the experience of all. Learn, then, "*to give.*" Consider yourselves as "not your own, but bought with a price;" and endeavour to glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirits, which are his. A great means of having it in our power to act on this principle is *practice of economy.* Those who give their minds to this work will find their means multiply amazingly. Frugality will open a variety of sources, and furnish a number of means of well-doing. There is scarcely an individual who has it not in his power so to act, that he may do some good to those who are about him. Neither rich nor poor are excluded from this blessedness of giving. The apostle says, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hand the thing that is good, *that he may have to give to him that needeth.*" The apostle taught the poor so to act as to be able not only to supply their own wants, but to communicate to the necessities of others. If we consult vanity, and are guided by fashion, and give way to covetousness, and indulge in vain show, we shall never have means to do good to others: a mean and sordid disposition will ever keep pace with the love of splendour and show. But if we "love not the world, nor the things of the world," considering that "all that is in the world is not of the Father, but of the world," we shall always be furnished with ample means of doing good. He who anxiously wishes to advance the interests of his neighbour will always find himself able to do so.

And while we aim to do good by supplying the bodily wants of our fellow-creatures, let us remember that there are objects still more noble. He who provides instruction for those around him, does more than he who supplies food; and he who furnishes spiritual knowledge, does still more; but he who prepares and sends forth agents to impart spiritual knowledge to thousands, does the highest good of which we can possibly conceive. And this is the very object we have now in view; we call upon you to support an institution by which young men are fitted for the work of the ministry. And, surely, Christians never so imitate Christ as when aiming to bestow the greatest gift He has ever given to men. "When He ascended upon high, He gave apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And who can possibly calculate the effects of this gift?" Christ has, by this means, brought millions to rejoice in his truth; millions of wanderers have been reclaimed; millions have been converted from the error of their ways, and as long as they exist they will bless his name. And how is this good to be perpetuated? Most who are called by God are called by a holy ministry. The gospel is still "the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth." And, in the present state of society, none can be qualified for this work without much preparation. God has, indeed,

at various times, raised up men who, without the aids of human learning, have shone most brightly, and been eminently useful. In our own denomination, a Bunyan and a Fuller have risen up, and attained a gigantic height. But these are exceptions—we have no right to expect such men every day. While education is proceeding throughout society, we must keep pace. Scarcely a congregation is now to be found in which there are not some who consider and examine all that is said.

I need not say one word to induce you to acknowledge the necessity and importance of academical institutions. That for which I have the honour to plead is one of the most ancient, and is, at least, equal to any in existence. The students have the advantage of a library, which is, perhaps, not excelled by any in the kingdom. They are aided in their various pursuits by learned and pious men. In consequence of building, a debt has been contracted, which has placed the trustees in great difficulties, and prevented them from receiving the number of young men who might otherwise be accommodated. They make a strong appeal to you, while thus struggling with difficulties, and aiming to raise up a number of young men who shall declare to many people the words of eternal life. Many demands have lately been made upon you, and much has been said to excite you to benevolence ; but " be not weary in well-doing." We expect no large proportion of your property ; you will do nobly on this occasion if you only devote a small portion of your superfluity. And surely you will do this, anxious to experience the blessedness of those who give, and to lay up for yourselves those rewards which God has graciously promised to bestow. Remember, that though " the excellency of the power is of God, and not of man," he has put this " treasure in earthen vessels." " How shall they hear without a preacher ? and how shall they preach except they be sent ?" and how can they be duly qualified, unless you furnish means ? If Christians withhold their aid, the Church of God must cease ; places of worship must be shut up ; souls must be neglected. But you will not allow this ; you will come " to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Remember that it is the cause of God : the instruments may be weak and feeble, but they are such as Christ employs in going " forth conquering and to conquer ;" they form part of that army which He is leading forth, who hath " on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS ;" and they are " called, and chosen, and faithful." He who despises these ministers as mean and contemptible, would also despise and contemn their MASTER, if He were upon the earth. Listen to Him who says, " It is more blessed to give than to receive ;" He who has said it will assuredly make it good in an abundant recompense to all who have " studied to adorn the gospel of God our Saviour."

LXXXVII.

HUMILITY ILLUSTRATED AND ENFORCED.*

1 PETER, v., 5: *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder: yea, all be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, January 6th, 1831, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.

This was the last sacramental lecture which Mr. Hall lived to preach: he was seized with his last illness on the very day, February 10th, on which he was to have delivered the next monthly address on a similar occasion; and, reclining on a sofa, he calmly expired on the afternoon of February 21. In his whole spirit, aspect, and manner, he presented, on the present occasion, as a friend remarked to me at the time, the very portrait of the grace which he so beautifully recommended. At the close, he gave out the hymn of Watts, beginning "Come hither, all ye weary souls." I spoke to him in the vestry, little supposing that it was for the last time. The sketch of this sermon was transcribed on the next morning: and it is a remarkable circumstance that, on this last opportunity alone, as though impelled by a prophetic sympathy, I preserved, at the same time, the following fragments of the prayer which preceded this farewell address. Simple, and almost purely Scriptural, as are the sentiments and expressions, they may be deemed interesting here, as they present, I believe, the only recorded relic of those prayers, in which, scarcely less than in his preaching, Mr. Hall excelled; and this so near to his death. I give it *verbatim*, as noted at the time: in all his prayers the impression was much enhanced by the utterance, which was eminently that of one "praying in the Holy Spirit," and "clothed with humility."

"O Thou, who art the Fountain of all good! we would approach Thee with that humility and reverence which become us in all our addresses to Thine infinite Majesty. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were created, from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God. As from Thee we have derived our existence, so on Thee we depend for every moment of its continuance: in Thee we live, and move, and have our being. Thou hast been the refuge of Thy people in all generations; our fathers trusted in Thee, and were holpen; they looked unto Thee, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. As for man, his days are as grass; but the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him. We bless Thee that we are permitted once more to appear in Thy presence, the spared monuments of Thy providential goodness. We beseech Thee to assist us in these sacred exercises; in singing Thy praises, and hearing Thy holy word. We serve Thee only with Thine own; and what we have received in mercies and blessings, we would render back to Thee in gratitude and love. Enable us to consider the operations of Thy hand in all things around, and all things within us; in the workings of Thy providence abroad, and of Thy Spirit upon ourselves. Let us make Thee the Omega as well as the Alpha, the end as well as the beginning, of all our undertakings; let all our works be begun, continued, and ended in Thee. May we put on the whole armour of God, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; and, seeing that we are encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses, may we lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Since our adversary, the devil, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, him may we resist, steadfast in the faith. May we rejoice as if we rejoiced not; weep as if we wept not; and, knowing that the end of all things is at hand, may we let our moderation be known unto all men. O Lord, hear us in these our supplications, and pardon and accept us, and wash us and our services in the precious blood of the dear and adorable Redeemer; for whom we bless Thee, as Thine unspeakable gift; and with whom, to Thyself and Holy Spirit, be undivided and everlasting praises. Amen.—GRINFIELD.]

THIS epistle, like most of the others, is addressed, not to individuals, but to a society of Christians. If we forget this, we shall lose much of the propriety and pertinency of what is addressed. It is a principal design of these epistles to regulate the conduct of churches to the end of time; and if they were more studied in this view, there would have been much less corruption and misconduct in the Christian Church.

No grace is more frequently recommended in these writings, as deserving the attention of Christians in their societies, than humility. In the text, a particular branch of this grace is laid down, the subjection of the younger to the elder; from this, the apostle passes to the

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

general exercise of deference and submission by one towards another; and this he enforces by a consideration of irresistible weight, that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

I proceed, first, to illustrate the injunction here given, and then the motive by which it is enforced.

I. When Austin was asked what was the first grace of a Christian, he answered, humility: what the second, humility: what the third, humility. This grace enters more deeply into the Christian character, it is more fundamental and radical to the nature of all true religion, than any other grace whatever. The foundation of repentance is laid in an abasing sense of our guilt; our meanness before the majesty of God as creatures of his power, aggravated by our vileness and exposure to punishment, as transgressors of his law.

The reason why men are not humble is, that they do not see the greatness of God. The angels, though the highest of creatures in excellence and station, are the humblest in spirit; they hide their faces before the glory of the Lord; they have the clearest view of his holiness and glory, and therefore they prostrate themselves in the lowest state before Him.

It is the effect of all knowledge to humble us, by producing a sense of our distance from the object which we contemplate: the farther we advance in knowledge, the more this distance widens on our view: hence, where an Infinite Being, where God is the object of contemplation, there must be infinite scope for humility in his worshippers. And this has always been the effect: thus Isaiah, when he had seen the glory of the Lord, cried out that he was himself unclean: Job, when he had seen the Lord, abhorred himself as vile.

The gospel is peculiarly adapted to produce this feeling: this is described as its very end and effect: "No flesh shall glory in his presence; the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." This effect arises from the very constitution of the gospel; as it is a revelation of the free grace of God to sinners, without any respect to moral or natural differences of character. Hence no room is left for self-righteous pride even in the best: because every one must know so much more of himself, and his own sins, than he can of others, that he is compelled to feel himself as "the chief of sinners," and, in "lowliness of mind, to esteem others better than himself."

The grace of God is given, at first, without any merit of ours; and, after it has been given, more grace is constantly needed by us to keep us in the right way; so that, from first to last, we are humbled: "Not for works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy, He saves us." All is calculated to lay man low and exalt God: in addition to the natural nothingness of the creature, we have to remember the desert of infinite wrath for our sins. He that has the deepest sense of his own unworthiness will feel the greatest value for redeeming grace. To such a person, the least mercy will appear great; if not great in itself, yet great as conferred on him: how great, then, "the riches of eternal glory!"

In prosperity, if we are humble, instead of "sacrificing to our own

net, and burning incense to our own drag," we shall feel that the favour of God has conferred all; as David said, "What am I, or what is my father's house, that thou hast raised me to the throne of thy people!" or as Jacob said, "With my staff I passed over, and now I am become two bands: I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, O LORD!" In affliction, humility will reconcile us to our lot; with Jeremiah we shall say, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?" our chastisement will appear less than we deserve.

At all times, if humble in heart, we shall walk in a sober and serious spirit, as under a sense of the presence and eye of God, "as seeing Him who is invisible." In prayer, we shall be earnest, wrestle with Him for the fulfilment of his own promises, lay hold on his strength and his covenant: not as those who seem to think that, in their prayers, they are conferring a favour upon God, but as surprised at his condescension in hearing and accepting our offerings. We shall be fervent in proportion as we are humble suppliants; we shall feel our wants, and be prepared to receive out of his fulness.

In regard to the future events of life, we shall resign ourselves to his wisdom and power; acknowledging Him in all our ways, and hearing his voice as saying to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it." In regard to others, in all indifferent matters, and where principle is not opposed, we shall aim to please them; even as Christ pleased not himself alone: and in our church fellowship, we shall seek to serve and benefit our brethren, and show respect to all, as the younger to their elders.

Humility disposes us to meekness in our behaviour, as pride inflames animosity: it inclines us to bear, rather than retort, reproach; as David said of Shimei, "Let him curse:" it teaches us to "walk in love, forbearing and forgiving;" as the blessed Redeemer, "when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to God." His humility appeared most conspicuous in the scene of his last sufferings. Where there is an absence of this grace, there must be endless dissensions in a church: we can "keep the unity of the Spirit" only "in the bond of peace;" and peace can be preserved only by the exercise of mutual humility: where this prevails, there will be a brotherly deference and kindness, an affectionate and sympathizing spirit, and the greatest harmony among the members.

When the ministers of the Church are seen struggling for pre-eminence, or the members divided among themselves, it is in opposition to that Christian humility, which blunts the edge of all angry and violent passions; which reconciles us to inferior stations, while it makes us safe in those which are superior; which will teach every one to say, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God," than fill the highest place apart from Him. Under this influence, "the eye will not say to the hand, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of thee;" but every member will perform his part and duty with complacency and delight.

II. And the motive by which such a temper is recommended is one of the utmost force: it is this, that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

1. "God resisteth the proud."* The expression is very emphatic; He sets himself in battle array against him; marks him as an object of peculiar indignation. It is not so said of any other temper. And the truth of this expression has been often exemplified. In the course of Providence, it is a general rule, that "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Hence attentive observers of Providence have been led to fear an approaching rebuke, where they have perceived the rising of a proud spirit. Nebuchadnezzar was spared while he went on ravaging kingdoms and shedding blood; but when he forgot God in his pride; when he boasted that he had built his great capital "by the might of his power and for the honour of his majesty," it was then that he was condemned to grovel in the dust as a brute. When Rabshakeh came defying the God of Israel, it was then that he was blasted in his pride; then God put forth the arm of his vengeance, and said, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther!" then God put a hook into his nose, and turned him back like a beast, while he smote by an angel the immense army of Sennacherib in one night! Herod was suffered to go on in his evil and bloody deeds; it was not until he made an oration, and received the idolatry of his audience, and gave not God the glory; it was not until that hour of impious pride that God smote him with death, and gave him up to be eaten of worms!

Even among the children of God, if any of them give way to a haughty spirit, a severe rebuke is sure to follow: this we see in the fall of Peter. For, of all things, pride is the most opposite to the greatness and glory of the Divine Being: "what have we, that we have not received?" to be proud, therefore, of what we owe entirely to God, is to set up ourselves against Him; and this must end in a fall. "Who hath hardened himself against Him, and prospered?" The Spirit of God retires from such a mind: the proud soul is not susceptible of the influences of that Spirit, whose emblem is the meek and gentle dove. It is with the spirit of the humble that He, who inhabits eternity, delights to dwell. When the heart is filled by pride, nothing but spiritual barrenness and hardness can ensue; and until He, who has been offended, is once more humbly sought, and applies his medicinal grace in answer to prayer, no light of his face can shine there. In a word, the proud are equally disqualified for the duties of Christianity here, and for the blessings of glory hereafter.

2. "But," as it is added, "He giveth grace to the humble." The same words are used by the Apostle James, with the additional expression, "He giveth more grace." The humble feel their poverty, and pray for grace; and their prayers are heard. While the rich are sent empty away, the hungry are filled with good; more and more grace is given to such, the more they ask. When the sinner breathes

* ὁ Θεος τυις ὑπερηφανοις αντιτασσεται, contrasted with παντες αλληλυις ὑποτασσομενοι. The Greek expressions of the whole passage are singularly picturesque and emphatic.—GRINFIELD.

the sigh, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" then he is justified. The moment any person thus feels himself a sinner, and casts himself upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, from that moment he is pardoned, he is accepted, he is lifted up from the dust. And grace is the earnest of grace: the more such penitents receive, the more they desire: they press towards the mark. And God delights to give, whenever his gifts are improved. There is no degree of grace that He will not give to the humble and the earnest suppliant. The proper place for guilty creatures is the dust of humiliation! The first blessing pronounced by our Saviour was pronounced on the "poor in spirit:" theirs, as He assures us, is the eternal kingdom! divested of self, they become heirs of God!

III. Let us, then, my dear brethren, seek and cherish this grace, the only temper that can make us shine before God, the only one that can render us blessings to each other.

The apostle exhorts us to "be clothed with humility." Men always use and wear their clothing, and we are to be clothed with his grace as a permanent vesture. It should pervade every part of our character; all the faculties of the mind: it should regulate the understanding, the will, and the affections.

And then all other graces will shine the brighter through the veil of humility: it will shed a cheering influence on all. Whatever our gifts or attainments may be, let us see that humility bears its just proportion to the rest.

Finally, in the heavenly world, as all other graces will be perfect, so will this. The song of heaven is inspired by humility; the worshippers cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!" they abase themselves in the dust, and glorify only God and the Lamb. This is the spirit of the Church on earth; the spirit of the Church in heaven; and, just in proportion as we possess this spirit, we are prepared to serve God here, and to enjoy his glory forever!*

* Among the notes of sermons left by Mr. Hall himself [and preserved in the third volume of this edition, page 149–154], is the imperfect sketch of an admirable sermon, from James, iv., 10, on "Humility before God," which I heard him deliver in Bridge-street Chapel, November, 1820, and of which, as of several other sermons, I retain an original record. In the sketch to which I have referred, "Humility before God" is considered in reference, first, to our estimate of self; secondly, to our reception of the Divine word. Here the sketch is broken off in the midst. In the remaining parts of the discourse, as I heard it, humility was considered, farther, as it respects, thirdly, the exercises of devotion; fourthly, the reception of Providential dispensations. The whole was concluded with a twofold appeal to irreligious persons, and to professing followers of Jesus Christ. The present sketch may be regarded as an appropriate and interesting sequel to that which I have mentioned.—GRINFIELD.

LXXXVIII.

GROWTH IN GRACE.*

2 PETER, iii., 18 : *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day, Feb. 18, 1827.]

THESE words are recommended to our regard by the solemn circumstances under which they were recorded. They were written by the Apostle Peter when he was about to put off the tabernacle of the body. They were written by him when he was desirous that after his decease his converts should have his doctrine always in remembrance. They were the apostle's dying testimony ; and he thought there was nothing with which he could better close his ministry, so far as his inspired writings formed a part of it, than by this injunction.

But some persons venture to say that growth in grace is impossible ; that there is no such thing ; that all true holiness is in Christ, and is made ours by imputation ; and that, as this grace is equal in all, we cannot grow in it. But the Scriptures speak a very different language. They speak of an internal holiness communicated to the soul, as well as of a righteousness imputed for justification : of the necessity of a new birth, as well as of justification by the merits of Christ. They inculcate an internal renovation of the heart, of a spiritual nature and character, as well as a state of pardon and acceptance before God. They teach, not only that men must be interested in the merits of Christ, but also, that "if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature ; old things have passed away, and all things have become new."

It is hardly necessary for me to recall to your recollection, that our Lord represents the growth of grace in the human heart by the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear ; and by the grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown, is the least of all seeds, but which becomes, by a progressive growth, the greatest of herbs ; which comparison, indeed, may be interpreted of the manner in which the gospel was first propagated in the world, but ought not to exclude religion as an internal principle in every heart. The blessed Redeemer also compares the kingdom of heaven to "leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened ;" a representation which implies progression, successive improvement, and advances in inward piety. The apostles likewise use the same language. St. Paul says to the Thessalonians, after commending their love, in order to exhort them to go forward in it still more, and cultivate a higher degree of the same principle, "As touching brotherly love, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you ; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another ; and indeed ye do

* From the notes of the Rev. Dr. Wilson.

it towards all the brethren which are in Macedonia; but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." And again, he prays, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men." And in the second Epistle he thanks God "always for them, because their faith grew exceedingly, and the charity of every one of them towards each other abounded."

The same apostle proposes himself as an example of the progress which Christians ought to make in grace: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do: forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark." These and other passages intimate the progression of religion in the heart, the necessity of growth in grace.

If there be no growth in grace, it is difficult to conceive in what practical religion consists. For what room can there be for watchfulness, effort, prayer, humiliation, if there be no danger? And what danger can there be, if grace can neither be impoverished nor increased? What reason can there be, in such a case, for guarding against evil or aspiring after good? Nay, how can either of these be possible? A state fixed and stationary cannot be the object of lively anxiety and care.

But the apostle teaches us a very different doctrine in the passage before us. Let us, then, point out some indications of the growth in grace which he recommends.

But let me here premise a remark. Growth in grace is what I may call proportionate. It is a growth in every part of religion in its due place and proportion. It is not growth in knowledge, without practical piety. Speculative knowledge, however it may advance, is not growth in grace: it makes men contentious, high-minded, and less edifying to others. Growth in knowledge, if it be without a proportionate conformity to the image of Christ, and the cultivation of devotion and practical religion, merely puffeth up. Growth in grace respects all the graces of the Spirit. The child in health experiences an expansion of all the parts of the body, till it arrive at the fulness of stature of mature age. One part is not invigorated while others decay. The arm, for example, does not grow while the rest of the body remains stationary. As every part of a healthy tree flourishes and grows alike, partaking equally of the life which is in the root, so does the Christian. Where there is real growth in grace, no duty is neglected, no virtue is cultivated to such an extent as to overshadow other virtues; there is no systematic disregard of any single part of the Divine will. He has respect to *all* God's commandments, and *all* false ways he utterly abhors.

Let us now give some indications of what growth in grace is.

I. We may judge of it by the increased disinterestedness of our religious emotions. Whether we can ever be completely disinterested in religion is a matter of doubt. Perhaps we can never be quite free from a regard to our own interests; but there may be an approach to this disinterestedness.

When the mind of man is first illuminated to see the danger arising from sin and apostacy from God, his religion turns almost entirely on his personal fears and hopes. Repentance is the religion of fear: faith the religion of hope. These are personal: these confine and absorb his attention. He is conscious of nothing but a desire to escape the wrath to come; deepened by a conviction that he merits that wrath, together with some hope that he may escape, through the redemption and grace of the Lord Jesus.

But as he advances in his religious course, his fears subside. His own interests have been provided for: he can look more abroad, and he can see things of a spiritual nature as they are. He now begins to discover the excellence of the moral character of God. He sees the excellence of the Saviour, and discovers the peculiar glory and beauty of his character: he sees what draws his affections, and fixes his admiration on the Redeemer, apart from the sense of safety. He has a delectation, a pleasure, in the contemplation of Christ, distinct from the first emotions of joy at deliverance. The character of the great Redeemer rises upon him in its loveliness, as well as absorbs his faith from the necessity of his interposition. He says, with the spouse, "His name is as ointment poured forth. This is my beloved, and this is my friend. Thou art fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

He sees also the true character of God, beholding as in a glass his glory. His religion is not only the elevated raptures of adoration, but is accompanied with complacency—with rest in God, as satisfying all the desires of the soul. This more approaches the temper of heaven; this is religion of a higher character; this resembles more the adoration, the employment, the delight in obedience for its own sake, which characterize the heavenly inhabitants. Then he has a clearer discernment of the beauty of holiness; and in proportion to this, as well as in the preceding particulars, is his growth in grace. At his first conversion he broke off his sins from fear of eternal death; but now he hates them as much as he did then, and even more, from views of the deformity of sin in itself, its opposition to the Divine nature, its resistance to the infinite authority of God. This sets his whole soul against it. He now delights in the path of holiness for its own sake. He sees a charm, a beauty, in conformity to the will of God. His motives to obedience are higher and purer; they are connected more with gratitude for past mercies, and delight in present duty. He takes God as his heritage forever. He says, "Oh, how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day."

As, on the one hand, man cannot in this world be *wholly* disinterested, so, on the other, there is no degree of grace, probably, which has not something of this disinterested spirit. The Holy Spirit, in the first principles of the new nature, gives some perceptions of the excellence of the Divine character. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," says the apostle, describing the conversion of the Corinthians, "hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

II. Growth in grace will be indicated by a greater predominance of spirituality, and a greater separation from the pollutions of this present world. "To be spiritually-minded is life and peace." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "To be carnally-minded is death;" it is the distinguishing mark of the unregenerate. A progress, therefore, in spirituality, is a mark of growth in grace. Every advance in real religion must imply a proportionate degree of spirituality. The Christian's sinful adhesions hang less closely about him. He lays aside more the old man, and puts on more the new; he becomes more disengaged from the passions and affections which distinguish worldly men. He cannot, indeed, be indifferent altogether to outward things; he is in a corporeal form; he partakes of the joys and sorrows of humanity; he feels pain and grief, and experiences loss and disappointment, if not so acutely, yet as really as others. But as he grows in grace, he is more moderate and temperate as to earthly things. He uses the world as not abusing it; he has a superiority over it as his portion; the losses connected with it affect him with less agony; he rejoices and he sorrows more in the temper of a pilgrim and stranger. There is a greater ascendency of spiritual things in his heart; they occupy more of the sphere of his attention, and dictate more the resolutions of his mind. He is better prepared for heaven; for passing from an earthly to a heavenly state; for the enjoyment and pursuit of things spiritual, holy, permanent, eternal.

In these indications of growth in grace, it is necessary just to observe, that we are not to expect to discover them in the very act, and at the very time of growing. The vegetable creation cannot be traced in the moment itself of growth, as it actually is taking place; but if we look at it at different periods, and those not very remote from each other, we see that the growth has taken place; we see the different space which the tree occupies, and the expansion of all the parts. Thus Christians, at the time, cannot perceive the advance of grace in their characters. But let them look back on different parts of their past progress, and they will discover a visible improvement: they will see that their graces have now greater force, that their knowledge, and love, and spirituality are more elevated, more pure, more heavenly, more humble. I appeal to all the Christians before me, whether they do not find, as they go on, that spiritual things have a greater ascendency over their hearts; and whether they cannot discern this growth, when looking back on themselves and their past history.

III. Growth in grace is indicated by a more steady and successful resistance to temptation. There is often a higher impulse of passion in the young than in the experienced Christian. There is a novelty in the great discoveries of religion, when they first break upon the conscience of the unconverted; thus the habit of contemplating them necessarily diminishes and impairs. There is a fervour of love and affection, which is rarely carried into the more mature exercises of after life. But the Christian, as he grows in grace, resists temptation

with far more steadiness and success than the young convert. His conduct is more equal, his character more consistent; there is more of peace and repose in it; the heart is more fully governed by the Spirit of God; relapses into sin are more rare. Using his weapons, he acquires the art of employing them better, and with more success; he learns to "stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." It would be strange if one who was only putting on his armour could understand the use of his weapons, and stand against his enemies, and detect the wiles of an artful foe, as an experienced veteran. We cannot expect from a new convert that steadiness, that consistency, that resistance of temptation, which mark the mature Christian. Those who are advanced in grace inspire a just confidence in the minds of others, which cannot be the case as to new converts, however high their zeal or promising their character. We ought not to commit young converts to the assay of great temptations; their graces are tender, their habits are fresh, the combat between the two principles of grace and nature has but just commenced; they are not confirmed. By the very law of habits, they are in greater danger than the advanced and established Christian; every achievement strengthens his resolution, and invigorates his hopes, and diminishes the relative power of temptation. "The joy of the Lord is his strength." The more we yield, the weaker we become; our power of resistance is lost. And, on the other hand, the longer the Christian walks in the paths of holiness, the more he is capable of doing, and the faster he makes his way towards perfection.

And here we may easily try ourselves as to the question of our growth in grace. Ask yourselves only, How do you conduct yourselves under temptation; how do you meet provocations to malevolence, impurity, pride, arrogance, covetousness, anger, wrath, selfishness? Do you keep your guard when in slippery paths? When you look back, as to your conduct in critical situations, can you "rejoice in the testimony of your conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, you have had your conversation in the world?" If obedience is more entire; if the flaws and imperfections are fewer; if you keep yourselves from your iniquity; if temptation loses its power; if you can say with Nehemiah, "This did not I, because of the fear of God;" if this is your case, you have proofs that you grow in grace.

IV. The Christian may farther judge of his growth in grace by the degree of complacency with which he contemplates the prospect of death and eternity. Religion, the religion of Christ, will never permit us to think little of our last hour. That religion is not the religion of the Bible which is not habitually governed by the consideration of death. We must soon appear before God. This contemplation is never long absent from the mind of a Christian. When we, then, can contemplate death with complacency, and "desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better;" when we rise to "the full assurance of hope," in consequence of the diligence given to make our calling and election sure; when we can discern that our names are written

in the Book of Heaven; when we behold the fulness and grace of truth of that Saviour to whom we have intrusted our eternal interests; when, by conversing with the objects of faith, we can appreciate them aright, so that they overbalance in our practical judgment the impression of sensible objects, we then grow in grace: these are indications of our advance in religion. The more the Christian feels the emptiness of the world, its unsatisfactory nature, its falsehood, its deception of all his hopes, the more he is weary of it, not from misanthropy, but from those principles which connect him with a better world, the more he may conclude that he has grown in grace.

To live is, with the matured Christian, matter of resignation; to die, matter of choice. Death, instead of being the king of terrors, is viewed with calm and joyful expectation. "He is in a strait between two; having a desire to depart and be with Christ," and yet he is willing to continue and abide in the flesh for the purposes of usefulness o the Church, if it be God's will. If there be any principles which connect the Christian with another world; if there be any attraction from that upper state, the nearer we approach to it, the more powerful will be its virtue: the nearer our journey is to its close, the more contempt shall we feel for all earthly things, and the higher shall we rise in superiority over death. Heaven increases upon contemplation: the more we meditate upon it, the more we feel the poverty and nothingness of all in comparison with it.

Let me now, in application, exhort you to comply with the exhortation of the apostle, which we have thus explained.

1. Grow in grace; because this is the only way to be certain that you have any grace at all. If we aim not at growth in grace, we have never been converted to goodness. He that is satisfied with his attainments, has attained nothing. He that sees so little of the promises of the inward, transforming, elevating influences of grace, as to think that he has attained all he can desire, has never understood the first elements of the Christian life. No, we are begotten to a life which aspires after perfection; we have desires awakened which nothing but complete holiness will satisfy. He who says he is content with his progress, has never set out to heaven.

2. Grow in grace; because, though Christians, in fact, attain at last to very different degrees of perfection, yet it does not follow that any will be saved, if they dare to set limits to their obedience; if they persevere to aim at a lower mark than that of perfection; if they venture to set before themselves any less standard than the whole will of God. It is a proof of hypocrisy, of insincerity of heart, to be content with any other standard than the perfect example of Christ, the dictates of the Spirit, the whole law of God, holiness in all its parts. To grow, therefore, in grace is necessary to our Christian calling, is an indispensable accompaniment of a state of salvation.

3. Grow in grace, farther, if you would taste the consolations of religion. They are inseparably connected with it. "To be spiritually-minded is life and peace." Progress in religion is progress in happiness. It gives a taste of purer pleasures than the brightest im-

ages of human felicity have afforded the least intimations of. As the heart becomes pure, it is capable of receiving the satisfying happiness of religion. As the vessel of the conscience is purified, it becomes sacred; the Spirit of God pours into it the fullest tide of blessedness. The backslidings of Christians are the cause of their misery. When we turn towards the Sun of Righteousness, and seek brighter emanations of light and love from Him, He will shine full into the heart, and will shed comfort and peace there. God will give us to drink of those rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand for evermore.

Look back on your past experience. When did you walk in darkness, meditate terror, fear that you were not a true Christian? When you had forsaken God, when you ceased to walk closely with Him; when you followed lying vanities, and forsook your own mercies; when you ceased to pray—then it was you were entangled, then was the critical moment, the hour of successful temptation. If you would have the consolations of religion, the comfort of the Spirit, the presence of the Saviour, you must grow in grace. The Spirit of God cannot witness to a lie; you must shut your ears against temptation, you must not follow the voice of the seducer. If you would enjoy peace of soul, you must walk humbly and closely with your God.

4. Would you be useful in your day and generation, you must grow in grace. And who that is born of God would not desire to be useful? You must, then, press forward. There is no such thing as being stationary, if you would benefit mankind. Nay, if you stand still, if you give up resistance to evil, you will not only fail to be useful to others, but you will yourself decline more and more. If you mean to do good to the Church and the world, you must bring forth much fruit; so shall ye be Christ's disciples, and so will your heavenly Father be glorified. You must seek to be decked and adorned with the beauty of Christ, that you may attract sinners to Him. Your purity of life, your patience under sufferings, your moderation in earthly pursuits, your animated hope of glory after death—these will be the best means of infixing a conviction in the minds of men that there is a reality in religion; and, at least, will produce the wish of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

And soon the realities of eternity will be here. Every effort to do the will of God will then be recompensed in full measure. The Supreme Being will reward every one in proportion to his advances in piety. Those who have grown most in grace will stand nearest to the Saviour. Let us covet a distinguished place among the mansions which Christ will assign. "For, behold, He cometh quickly, that He may reward every man according to his work."

LXXXIX.

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.*

1 John, i., 3: *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day, January 8, 1827.]

As John leaned on the bosom of our Saviour, and there drank of that fountain of love which flowed within, so his epistle breathes the spirit of love; love to mankind at large, and especially to those who were partakers with him of the same precious faith. In the verse preceding the text, he breathes an ardent desire that his brethren might have fellowship with him in the gospel, and all its privileges; and he then describes in the text what this fellowship is. He invites them hereby to no common privilege, to no common community; but to one the most elevated and the most extraordinary—fellowship with God in Jesus Christ.

No error is more serious than that which prevails so much in the present day, of interpreting every high and glorious description of the privileges of Christianity as confined to the apostles and the apostolic age. To commit so fatal an error, is to exhibit the truth of another passage, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them." For may we not justly fear that these interpreters, finding nothing in their own experience that agrees with these representations of Scripture, and not knowing well how to deal with them, have thus been led to set them down as referring to a state of feeling and privilege peculiar to the first Christians; and have at length come to condemn all claims to them as enthusiastical, and invading the miraculous powers of the Spirit given to the apostles and first converts?

Now, if we were to allow what these interpreters assert to be true, the Bible, instead of being a present directory of faith and practice, would only be an ancient record of past sentiments, with which we should have no concern as a matter of experience ourselves. But, on the contrary, our religion is a counterpart of that recorded in the New Testament. We find those sentiments, feelings, and hopes within the breasts of Christians now, which are registered as the representations of Christianity in its first age.

Among the blessings included in these representations, fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, occupies a prominent place. It comprehends all the internal blessings and immunities of Christianity.

* From the notes of the Rev. Dr. Wilson.

Fellowship, or communion, is the participation of two or more persons in the same thing. If any number of persons, two or more, enjoy certain advantages or privileges in common, they have fellowship with each other in them. All men are brethren, as partaking of one common nature: they have communion with each other in all the emotions, duties, advantages of general benevolence, sympathy, love, as fellow-creatures and men. Those who are placed under the same government, and who share in common its benefits as fellow-countrymen, are drawn yet closer: they have fellowship with each other in all the blessings of legitimate government. Those, again, who reside in the same town, or form together a neighbourhood, and intermingle in all the offices of social life, have participation with each other, as fellow-citizens, in the benefits of municipal regulations, and the mutual charities and aids of neighbours. Those who form the same family have also fellowship with each other in the affections and relationships of a family. This is the closest of all fellowships; and in this class are included the communion of parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants.

The expression, therefore, in the text, must be understood in this sense; it is a participation of some blessings in common with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. It must be explained, indeed, in a manner suitable to the subject to which it is applied; but still the meaning must be the same: it is still the partaking of something in common. There is no meaning in the word but this. What, then, is this fellowship? It is of true Christians that the words are spoken. Others are invited to seek the blessing; but none except true Christians actually partake of this fellowship.

I. This fellowship consists in the moral excellences of the Divine Being; what the apostle calls "a divine nature."

Fellowship with God implies a participation of the same disposition of heart, the same moral tendency of mind. It is by Jesus Christ, the way to the Father, that this fellowship begins. We must come back to God first by a Mediator, and be justified by faith in his blood, before we can be qualified for this exalted communion. We thus become united to Christ, and are by faith partakers of the privilege of being sons of God. In this relation we stand; and, as the children of God, we have a new nature; we are "partakers of a divine nature." This expression is not rhetorical; it is not merely synonymous with any thing great; but it means that we are partakers of that moral nature in which God exists: his moral excellences are impressed upon the heart of the Christian; he partakes of God's holiness. Being adopted into his family, he has the spirit of adoption: he not only sees the excellence of God, but he receives some reflection and impress of it. And this excellence of God he discerns in the person of Jesus Christ: "We have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;" "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory

of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." All Christians have fellowship with each other in this new nature or disposition; and this springs from their fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, in a portion of their moral excellence. They walk in the same spirit, they follow the same steps. "Walking in the light, as He is in the light, they have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses them from all sin."

This is a most exalted privilege: for we had lost the image of God, and were in a state of alienation and ruin; but this restoration of the Divine image makes us again lovely in the eyes of God; it restores the highest distinction of our nature.

II. This fellowship includes an intercommunity of preference and delight.

When two or more persons are assimilated in disposition and moral feeling, they are prepared to appreciate each other aright, and to cultivate friendship. All friendship between God and man is founded on this assimilation. All complacency of God in man, and all delight of man in God, is the effect of renovating grace. Christians are capable of appreciating the beauty of the Divine holiness. They see God to be lovely, as well as great and awful. They are attracted by a sense of his benefits; but they also perceive his excellence in himself; and thus they love Him, and delight in Him, for his own moral attributes, for what He is in himself. They have a perfect esteem for his infinitely holy principles and character. They choose God as their portion; and He condescends to choose them as his portion, and the lot of his inheritance. They say of God, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee;" and God sees nothing under the whole heaven to attract his complacency but them. He delights in them as He does in his own Son: "That the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, even as Thou hast loved Me," are the words of our Lord, addressed to his heavenly Father; and Christians delight in God as their "exceeding joy:" they see in Him the Fountain of joy, above every thing else; they treasure up in Him all their hopes. God "rests in his love to them, and rejoices over them with joy;" and they rejoice in their relation to God, and say, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." His love is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. The love of Christ constraineth them. That love is the first principle which distinguishes the true Christian, and the first effect of faith in Christ.

This fellowship, therefore, with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, is vital and warm. It is not political and external, verified in some transient effects, but seated in the heart. The purest affections of the Christian are fixed on God and Christ as their centre.

III. This fellowship is one of action and pursuit.

Christians enter into the Divine plan, so as to be, in an humble sense, fellow-workers with God. The Christian understands the revealed ends of God in the dispensations of providence and grace; and his inward mind corresponds with them. God, having brought the Christian to a similarity of moral feeling, and to a preference and delight in himself, sets him at work on a course of holy action; and this course is in union with the Divine will. The Christian serves God in the gospel of his Son. He renounces the service of sin and the world; he follows not the desires of the flesh and of the mind; but he enters on a course of active obedience to God; and in this he has fellowship, so to speak, with the Divine pursuits and actings. God makes it his plan to communicate happiness by means of holiness and order: the Christian enters into this design, and seeks to benefit mankind by promoting peace and holiness; he aims at the happiness of his fellow-creatures; he lives not unto himself, but unto Him that died for him and rose again. As God has no personal interests in his designs and actions but that impulse of always seeking the best and highest good, so Christians have fellowship in this: they perform a disinterested course of duty, they have a delight in it, they imitate the love and benignity of God. As God promotes his glory by the success of the gospel, by manifesting his Son, so Christians work together with Him in this: they delight to promote God's glory by the progress of the gospel; they study to advance the designs of God in Christ; they exalt the Saviour; they endeavour to allure men by his example to return unto Him.

The Christian has also fellowship with his Saviour in his conflicts: the triumph over principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, which remains to be effected, is carried on by means of his Church; and every Christian is a soldier under this banner; he sympathizes with the Eternal Mind in feeling a holy jealousy of the name of God, in fighting on the Lord's side, in leaguing himself against the spirit of the world and the power of Satan. As Christ is described in the heavenly vision of the Apocalypse as riding upon a white horse, and having a name on his thigh, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," and as going on "conquering and to conquer;" so Christians are described as riding on white horses, and having the name of God in their foreheads; as being "the called, and chosen, and faithful; and overcoming, by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony."

The Christian thus is interested in the great revealed purposes of the Most High. He has fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ therein. He unites himself with the Eternal Mind. He delights in entering into the holy purposes of God, of peace on earth and good-will towards men. Christ puts on him somewhat of his honour.

Christianity has in every age achieved its conquests in a way which the world thinks nothing of. Christianity would have died with the first century, but for this zeal of the Church; but the apostles and first teachers were filled with the mind of Christ; they entered into his place; they considered it as belonging to themselves; "they counted not their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Let us not think that we can have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, if it does not make us partakers of the energy of the first Christians, of their practical principles, of their pursuit of the great end — the communication of holiness and happiness to mankind. Every one, in his own station, must do this; not only by aiding in all designs for the propagation of the gospel, but by silent prayers, by a pure and holy conduct, by a spirit of unity and love, by avoiding the appearance of evil, by filling up his station in the house of God, by discharging the duties of social life. Thus he becomes a witness for God and his Christ in the world.

IV. This fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, is a participation of their felicity.

The happiness of Christians, as men, arises from a variety of sources. They are men like others, and while in this tabernacle many things are common to them with the rest of mankind. They must have the pains and pleasures of a physical nature, the sympathies of general society, the joys and sorrows of men. They cannot rise above those sources of sensibility which belong to them as inhabitants of this world.

But still there is a happiness belonging to them, as being in a right state of mind towards God; and this is of the same nature with that which constitutes the supreme happiness of God himself. I speak with reverence; but the love of holiness, a heart at peace with God, pardon and acceptance, approbation of conscience, joy from deriving life from Christ, moral self-approbation—what is all this but a part of the Divine complacency of God, in being conscious to himself of infinite purity, goodness, truth, and love? The Christian derives his happiness from the blessed sensation that he dwells in love with God and with the company of his fellow-Christians; and is not this a part of the happiness of God himself, who communicates to him out of his fulness? "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Again, when the Christian is uniting himself with God and Christ by acts of faith, by efforts of devotion, contemplation, love, the influences of peace and union with Christ are such, and so endearing, that it is some participation of the Divine happiness itself. God is his own portion, his own rest, his own centre, and the Christian derives his happiness from resting upon that Eternal Centre of Felicity, in finding in God a fulness of

good; all desires being subdued to that one desire after happiness, which is only to be found in God. "If thou hadst known the gift of God," said our Lord, "and who it is that said unto thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." This water, of which our Lord here speaks so divinely, is, no doubt, the very element of the Divine happiness. The communication of those holy pleasures which spring from love, from faith, from devotion, is to have fellowship with the Divine fulness of felicity.

God communicates to Christians, first, his nature, and then his felicity. He prepares them for loving Him, for having the same delight, the same action and pursuit; and then, from this, He communicates to them of his felicity. He sanctifies the vessel, and then fills it with holy peace and blessedness. He makes it a recipient of holiness, and so of happiness. He begins by sanctifying, and then proceeds to bless more and more.

They partake, finally, of God's felicity when they are put in possession of the eternal reward of heaven. Thus they enter into the joy of their Lord; not only that which He bestows, but that which He possesses.

Here is the secret of the Lord which the stranger knoweth not; here is the inward refreshment of the Christian's soul. Under all calamities he has a peace and happiness which nothing can destroy, in the foretaste and hope of eternal glory. And this is what our Lord meant when he said, "My peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you."

Some portion of the fellowship with God which we have now endeavoured to trace in these four particulars belongs to all Christians; but in the highest exercises, it is not so.

Some parts of it are inseparable from the character of the Christian. The sanctifying spirit pervades his life. The conscience bears its testimony, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he has had his conversation in the world." A certain tranquillity arises in his mind from having secured his greatest interests, and that they are placed beyond the accidents of danger and death. Pardon and acceptance with God in Christ fill him with peace. Hope dawns upon his soul, and excludes a settled gloom.

But the higher orders and manifestations of this fellowship, so as to imbody heaven here below, are of rare occurrence; and some Christians have but little of this part of the blessing. But that fellowship which begins with purifying the heart and tranquillizing the conscience, will brighten and enlarge more and more; the peace will be sweeter, the hope will brighten. "You

shall return unto Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon your heads; you shall find joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." You are in union with "the blessed and only Potentate." You are travelling forward to a state of higher divine manifestation. The Father now loves you, and will come and take up his abode with you; hereafter you will dwell with Him in glory; there you shall serve Him day and night in his temple, and go out no more; there you will be independent of the external agents of nature, for the Lord God and the Lamb will be the light of that temple. Thus "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." The communications of God now are the preludes and foretastes of what is to come. "The path of the just," as to happiness as well as to spiritual improvement, "is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

One or two practical reflections may now be made, derived from the language of the apostle in the context.

1. The impossibility of this fellowship existing, unless we walk in the light.

Let none perplex himself with difficult questions, nor attempt to explore the secret purposes of God, nor try to refer to some high or hidden mysteries to ascertain whether or not he has fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Ask yourselves only this question: Am I walking in the light, as God is in the light? If you are setting your feet in his path, if you are bearing his name upon your forehead, and are cleansing yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; if you are distinguished from the world which lies in wickedness, then you may conclude you have this fellowship. For you walk on high, you are treading an elevated path, and God himself is walking with you there. God is bringing all his power to aid you there; you cannot sink with such a help; "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein."

But are you living in any known sin? Are you walking according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Are you reading and hearing the word of God, and not keeping it? Is there a secret practical determination that Christ shall not rule over you? Then do not lie by saying that you have fellowship with the Father. No: whatever be your professions, your knowledge, your zeal, your consolations, "if you say you have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, you lie, and do not the truth." He that walketh in darkness hath no fellowship with the Father. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" and "if we walk in the light as He is in the light," then only "we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

How many high professors are resigned to scorn by this infallible test! How many are there to whom Christ will say, "I never knew you: depart from me, all ye that work iniquity!"

Those whom Christ knows, He conforms to his image. There are but two elements—an element of moral darkness, and an element of light. Those whose element is light, deliberately prefer the will and favour of God to all other happiness. True religion will always leave some traces of its nature upon us. Few can doubt whether they live to the world, or live to the glory of Christ, if they would examine the matter. "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

2. Let Christians know the greatness of their privileges.

Remember that you were strangers, without Christ, without hope, without God in the world. The time was when you said to vanities, "Ye are my gods." You gave them practically the preference to God. But you have been brought to a stand; you have been stopped in your career; you have chosen Christ; you have enlisted under his banners; you are engaged in his service; you "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord." You are occupying with your talents during the absence of your Master and King; you wait the approach of death with composure; you have participation of the moral nature, the preference and delight, the actions and pursuits, and the felicity of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ. You treasure up your riches in heaven; you are preparing to see a world wrapped in flames, and yet lose nothing; because Christ has reserved for you "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Consider, then, the height of your privilege. Angels desire to look into these mysteries of love. They envy you not, but they congratulate you on the surprising immunities to which you are elevated. Their joys are heightened by the mysterious wonders of redemption. They will forever worship the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—for their several shares in the great work of salvation. "To the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God." They are ever learning new lessons of the character of God, and deriving new motives for adoring and serving Him.

This is, then, the height of your privilege. Heed not, therefore, the trials of your present state. Be of good comfort. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "You are begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Let not temporal things disturb you; act with the equanimity belonging to the expectants of such blessings. In a very brief time your state will be changed, and "death will be swallowed up in victory." In the interval, Christ's name and character are intrusted to your hands. The world will judge of the Christian religion according to your conduct and spirit. You must, therefore, act as those who are "the salt of the earth"—"the lights of the world;" thus you will become as

"a city set on a hill." Walk thus in all purity and holiness of conversation; walk as those whose "fellowship truly is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

XC.

UNION OF CHRISTIANS WITH CHRIST AND WITH EACH OTHER.*

1 Corinthians, xii., 27: *Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, December 10, 1829, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

The character of Jesus Christ, and the constitution of his Church, are dwelt on much at large in the New Testament, for our instruction in what we owe both to himself and to our fellow-Christians.

I. The union of Christ with his Church is sometimes illustrated by images borrowed from the relations of domestic life: those of master and servant, parent and children, husband and wife; sometimes by images derived from works of art, or from natural history: He himself represents it by the union of the vine with its branches. But nowhere is it placed in a more striking or instructive light than in this chapter by the Apostle Paul. The human system is here introduced in considerable detail, to set forth the union of Christians with Christ and with each other. The same figure has been often used by secular writers to represent society as a political and united body. The Church is thus represented here; the apostle describes a distinct plan and function assigned by infinite wisdom to every member of this body, so that the foot cannot say to the hand, nor the eye to the ear, "I have no need of thee:" if the whole body were one member, where were the body? but now God hath appointed a diversity of members for their respective uses: whence results a beautiful harmony, which it would be the extreme of folly to censure or amend. The Scripture idea of Christ represents him as identified with the Church, which is called the fulness or complement of Christ: the Church makes up that whole, of which Christ is the head; that temple of which he is the foundation: so that Christ would want something essential to Him, without the Church; by which, especially, his glory is displayed to angels in a future world.

In the text, we observe that the apostle represents, by a figure, the union that subsists between the Church and Christ: believers are styled his body; this, you are aware, is a figure; but the meaning is obvious; and it implies, first, the participation of a common nature; secondly, the direction which Christ has over his Church; and, thirdly, the affectionate union which subsists between both.

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

1. The participation of a common nature. In the former part of this chapter, the apostle had spoken of the union of Christians as those who participate of one Spirit. Christ makes them all his own by the communication of his own Spirit; just as the natural members are united with the head. The same Spirit anoints both Him and them; as the holy oil of Aaron ran down to the skirts of his priestly apparel. They receive, out of his fulness, grace for grace: grace, in the emanation, correspondent with grace in the reservoir. Notwithstanding the difference of nature and of office between Him and them, yet the graces of Christians are of the same origin and of the same nature with his. Every real Christian is animated by the same views, the same desires, the same tempers, the same principles of conduct, with his Divine Master. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" he must have this Spirit, first, in his regenerating, and then in his indwelling and sanctifying influence. The difference between Christians and men of the world is not a difference in degree; it is a difference in nature: Christians are born anew by a supernatural act of Divine power. And Christ is the standard and model to which they are all assimilated. Whatever steps are not his steps are false steps.

2. The direction of the Church is from Christ. Hence this union has been styled a political union: as He is the governor, the supreme authority, who prescribes all the duties to be performed by us. All religion emanates from Him, as King and Lord of all. It is the work of the Spirit to establish his authority in the heart: a sceptre, by which He gently, yet effectually, subdues his people. "Then are ye My disciples indeed, if ye continue in My word: he that loveth Me, keepeth My sayings."

3. The figure denotes that cordial and affectionate union which subsists between Christ and the Church. No man, says the apostle, hates his own flesh; and he urges the Divine declaration, that man and wife are one flesh, as a reason why a man should love his wife. This union appears to have been intended by God to shadow forth the union of Christ and the Church; for the apostle says, "This is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and the Church." The Church is loved by Christ as his body, endeared to Him by the most tender ties. In love to it, He descended from his throne to the cross; in love to it, He agonized and died: "He gave himself for it, that He might present it to himself a glorious Church." Such love as the Father has to Him, He has to the Church; He loved his disciples with the same kind of love with which the Father loved the Son, the object of his infinite complacency. And, by analogy, we ought to have the same love to Him, manifested by walking in his steps, consecrating ourselves to Him who so loved us. How dear ought that precious Saviour to be, who bought us with his blood! Every real Christian can say, with Peter, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!" Love to Christ is the very life-blood of piety; it constrains us to live unto Him who died and rose for us. Like loves like; and if Christ is the pattern, if Christ is the great Benefactor and Friend of his people,

how entire, intense, and constant ought to be our devotedness to Him!

II. In the next place, from the text we are taught the union of Christians with each other. "We are members in particular."

The former part of the chapter, read with attention, will give the most just and practical views of this union of Christians. Every member of the natural body, however mean, however feeble and obscure, is a member; so should no Christian be overlooked, however humble in gifts or office, since he stands in a sacred relation to Jesus Christ. To despise the image of God in the natural man, implies a profane disregard of that God who made man in his own image; but to despise this image in the spiritual man, is a higher species of impiety; all who bear the image of Christ will shine with Him in his glory; and are, therefore, entitled to a peculiar regard from every Christian, beyond what the most elevated of mankind would command; such are dear in the eyes of angels, conveyed in their arms at death to Abraham's bosom, because they own one Lord. It is an infinite honour to have any place in that body, of which the meanest part contains the germe of a glory which eye hath not seen nor heart conceived!

There exists an affection and sympathy between all the members. In the system of animal life, which is probably a modification of the spirit that animates the whole, the functions of all the rest are affected by one. Thus Christians are to feel for each other, "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ:" they are not to say, as Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" No; they are keepers of each other, they are to watch over each other with a godly concern; for he that recovers a sinner, saves a soul from death. Men of the world say, "Such a person needs help, but he stands out of my circle; I have nothing to do with him;" not so Christians: they say, "He is our brother."

The first name of believers, used in their best and purest age, even before they were called Christians, was the name of Brethren. This is the prayer of Christ, "That they may be one, as We are: that they may be perfect in one; that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me!" Therefore, to be perfect in Christ's esteem, is to be united. This will dignify the Church beyond any other distinction. Though Christians may differ in points of minor moment, yet they agree in all essential truths: they believe in one atonement, one sanctifying Spirit; they look at the same glory, they expect one home; they all alike feel themselves pilgrims and strangers on earth: one thing they dread, the displeasure of God; one thing they desire, his favour and holiness. If in any thing they are differently minded, God will reveal even this to them; and meantime, as far as they have attained, they walk by one rule. Christians drink into one Spirit: this marks them by a decisive line of demarcation from other men. In the light of eternity it will be seen that they differ from all besides; they have on their foreheads the mark of God.

There is no schism in the body, so long as it is in a natural and

healthful state; otherwise it tends to decay. Thus, for one member of Christ to envy others, is as unnatural and destructive as a division in the animal system. But when we see Christians forbearing to each other, kind to each other, bearing one another's burdens, casting the mantle of candour over each other's failings, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, what a lovely scene do we behold! In the primitive Church it was so: all there was peace within; strife and envy were only without. Oh, that those days of the Church were renewed! and, to this end, let all cultivate humility and love.

There are different offices in the body: some parts are organic, as the eye, the ear: these are instruments of sense, and peculiarly important. Thus, in the Church, some are apostles, some evangelists; but all are not such: yet each has his own place and use; each may contribute his portion to the general good; and if all would attend to this, there would be an unspeakable accession of happiness to the whole body. Let us remember, my dear brethren, that the eye of Christ is on us all; that Christ is the Judge eternal, to whom all power is given. Let us be faithful to fulfil each our allotted function. We cannot have a higher motive than this, that "we are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

XCI.

SELF-EXAMINATION PREPARATORY TO THE LORD'S SUPPER.*

1 Corinthians, xi., 28: *But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Jan. 10, 1828.]

Let a man examine himself with respect to his religious intentions and conduct. The Apostle Paul is here reproving the Corinthians for the manner in which they attended the Lord's Supper. They appear to have connected with this sacrament love feasts, called agapæ, instituted among the primitive Christians, in memory of the last supper of Jesus Christ with his apostles. These agapæ were usually kept before receiving the Lord's Supper, and were in use for the sake of catechumens, and for works of charity, but which the Corinthians abused by the indulgence of their appetites to great excess. On this account the Lord had brought on them sickness and affliction, and in some instances death. "For this cause," the apostle says, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Therefore he exhorts and reproves them, "that they might not be chastened of the Lord, and judged, and condemned with the world." "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another; and if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come

* From the notes of John Greene, Esq.

not together unto condemnation." To remedy these disorders, he recommends the duty of self-examination: "Let a man examine himself," viz., with respect to the reality of his character, and by his religious intentions, and then let him approach the table of the Lord, with seriousness and preparation, that he may secure to himself an upright state of mind, and the benefits attending this ordinance. By adopting these means, my brethren, the greater and firmer will be our consolation in religion.

1st. I shall endeavour to point out in what respect we are to examine ourselves.

2dly. How we are to conduct this inquiry.

3dly. To enforce the duty, from the advantages resulting from it.

First. Let us examine as to the reality of our religion; whether we have that true faith in Jesus Christ by which we are justified, and have eternal life, and become accepted in his sight.

Some have imagined that they have attained this satisfaction by an audible voice, or by secret whispers, that they are the children of God. But this may be delusive; for Satan, we are informed, can transform himself into an angel of light. The Scriptures nowhere point out that any one individual is an heir of glory; but they exhibit those qualifications which belong to the Christian character, and lay down the conditions of salvation; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Certain things must be found *in us*, to prove that we are in a state of justification and salvation. For example: that we repent of our sins, and that we exercise dependance on Jesus Christ. The heirs of salvation are those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel." We may examine ourselves, then, whether we have done these; whether we have had, or have now, our sole dependance upon the righteousness and the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the turning-point of salvation. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Have we made Him our way? Are we depending upon the merits and death of the Redeemer? Or do we know whether we have any serious spiritual views of Christ, so as to cast ourselves upon Him as perishing sinners? If we can answer these questions in the affirmative, we have reason to hope, and to enjoy "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is saving faith, and the fruits of it will appear in our lives; they will work by love. In the first place, by love to God, and then to the brethren: "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord," and with "full purpose of heart," cleave to Him.

The Scriptures speak of those who "do righteousness." They are those who do not habitually commit sin; who "sow to the spirit, and not to the flesh;" who live to God, and to please God. If, my brethren, we find this is the case with us, and that we have a hatred of all sin, particularly of that sin which doth most easily beset us, and that we have a decided preference of holiness to every thing else, it is a plain proof that we are born of God, and are the children of God; for we should not hunger and thirst after righteousness if we had not this new nature. This is not the course of the natural man.

Secondly. How we are to conduct this inquiry. In the first place, we should ascertain the *reality*, and not the *strength*, of our faith. We are not to imagine that we have no faith because it is weak and infantine; but we should judge of it by its genuineness and sincerity. Christians of the most feeble faith ought to come to the table of the Lord, and observe his ordinances. The most tender minds ought to be planted in the house of the Lord, that they may be strengthened, and enabled to bring forth fruit; for the least degree of saving faith constitutes the Christian.

Again, we must not judge of our state by what is evanescent, by our frames or feelings; but by what is stated and habitual, by what is the condition of our hearts; for if our piety be genuine, it will form a habit of holiness; it will be our way, and we may certainly know what is the road in which we are walking.

Again, we should inquire into the state and bent of our minds towards God, in our choice of Him. Do we love God as the supreme good, in opposition to mere frames and feelings? The essence of religion lies in the will, and claims the preference of God as the end of our being, and the Saviour as the means or way to the Father. This will afford a satisfactory evidence. Our feelings may vary according to the state of our health and the constitution of our body. But do we calmly and practically prefer the interests of religion above every other? It lies in the understanding and the will; for we are what we will to be. If this, then, my brethren, is the state of our hearts, we shall see his face in righteousness, we shall rejoice in his favour, and close with Jesus Christ in his offers of salvation, and may rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Though our religious frames and feelings may not be according to our wishes, yet, if the bent of our minds be to walk in the fear and love of God, and we are seeking light, and aspiring after perfection, we have reason to believe the Divine Being has wrought a saving change in our hearts. The apostle says, "Now He that has wrought us for this selfsame thing is God, who hath also given us the earnest of the Spirit." You will, then, not depend so much upon feelings as on an elightened mind, a rectitude of will, a choice of God and Christ above all earthly things, as the essential parts and evidences of true religion.

Thirdly. The advantages that will result from this examination, supposing that it leads to a satisfactory result. In the first place, it will produce peace of mind, and joy in believing. We cannot have peace while we know not whether we are in the way to heaven or hell. Religion cannot be a state of happiness until you are determined in your choice of God. You will then be relieved from all distressing anxieties and fears, and your goings will be established. In the second place, it will produce gratitude. If you have reason to believe that you are a true believer, there will be a ground of gratitude to God. It will induce a spirit of holy joy, "giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." We shall then exclaim, with the apostle, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should

be called the sons of God." Then shall we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love God and keep his commandments. "For I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day." To such, my brethren, as are redeemed, and who know that they are redeemed, our Saviour says, "Rejoice not that the spirits are made subject to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

In the third place, it will produce strength. The joy of the Lord will be our strength. The consolations of the Divine presence, and the hope of being with the Lord in glory, will produce patience and fortitude in the midst of the trials of life. There will be the "witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are the children of God; and if sons, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ;" for the hope of eternal glory is an animating principle.

What if death should remove you this year—or however that may be, death is soon coming—how great the satisfaction to be able to say, "I know in whom I have believed!" We should give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; to *know* that we are secure; to *know* that we are justified by faith; to *know* that "neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Then we can look forward with a noble superiority, and say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" "Nay, but in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us."

XCII.

THE APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION.*

2 Cor., xiii., 14: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.*

[Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Thursday evening, Feb. 7, 1828, preparatory to the Lord's Supper.]

God has revealed his truth in various dispensations, and these have been distinguished by various degrees of light and privilege. We, as Christians, are favoured with incomparably greater advantages than believers enjoyed under the Old Testament. The doctrines of the gospel are far more clear and copious in revealing Divine truth, and the sacraments more simple and spiritual. But some things may be regarded as the vitals of religion, essential to the functions of spiritual life, and common to believers under every dispensation; of this nature are the three things

* From the notes of the Rev. T. Grinfield.

mentioned in the text. Taking these things in the order here presented, we consider,

I. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." This is mentioned first, not that it stands first in the order of these great blessings, but it is most obvious, most immediate, to the view of a Christian. Jesus Christ naturally came foremost before the apostle's mind, as the procurer of all Divine blessings. And "grace" is mentioned as the peculiar property of Jesus Christ. Grace denotes free and sovereign favour. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." It is He who made it worthy of God to dispense gratuitously all those spiritual blessings which constitute the patrimony of the Church. He fills every part of the system of redemption. Viewed prospectively, He appears as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world; viewed retrospectively, as the sacrifice made for sin.

The grace of Jesus Christ includes two things: all that He has done, and all that He still does, for the Church.

1. All that He has done and suffered for it. His grace drew Him down from above into our world and nature: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be made rich." All that He endured during his sojourn among men, and especially in Gethsemane and on the cross; all his poverty and sufferings, as a servant of his Father, proceeded from his grace: all the peace and hope, the confidence and strength, of his people, are so many streams that flow from this fountain of the grace of Jesus Christ.

2. It includes all that He still does for his Church. He sits above as its High Priest and Intercessor; He has all power given to Him for the interests of his people: when He was ready to depart from this world to heaven, He said, "Go, preach the gospel to all the world; lo, I am with you always to the end;" "where two or three meet in My name, I am in the midst." His people receive all that they need out of his fulness. "I live," says the apostle, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; I live by the faith of the Son of God: I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." The answer of Jesus Christ to the tried apostle was most satisfying: "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Most gladly, therefore," says Paul, "will I bear my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest," may pitch its tabernacle over me.

We shall never know, on this side of eternity, the full amount of our obligations to Christ; the manner and extent in which He guards his Church, in which He directs, and sanctifies, and comforts his people. When the apostle prays, then, that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" might be with his brethren, he prays that they might experience the benefit of all his interpositions in favour of believers, not only as past, but as still continued; and when we experience this benefit, when we feel happy in Christ

under all circumstances and trials, then we have this prayer fulfilled to ourselves; the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with us.

II. The second of these great blessings is "the love of God." By God we are here probably to understand God the Father. As the grace of Christ is the meritorious, so the love of the Father is the original cause of all spiritual blessings. The former source is traced to another still beyond. The Father is represented in Scripture as originating the salvation of man, as giving and sending his Son: "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son." "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Jesus Christ always speaks of himself as sent by the Father. Love is the principle from which all redemption proceeds; no higher spring exists; nothing can be assigned as the cause, but all is the effect, of this: it is called an "everlasting love, with which God loved his Church;" "the good pleasure of his will;" "the purpose which He purposed in himself, before the world began." The love of God is that unfathomable fountain from which all the streams of salvation, of grace and glory, flow: all proceed from God, and God is love.

The apostle prays that his brethren might feel themselves the objects of this love. This is dignity, this is felicity, and there is none beside—to be embraced in the arms of the Divine Father as his beloved children! St. John stands astonished at this love, and exclaims, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be!" It is a prospect beyond all estimation, beyond all conception! But let it be remembered that, if we would enjoy the love of God, we must keep his commandments. None of the consolations of Divine love are to be found in union with a disobedient and licentious course of conduct: we must walk in the light, as He is in the light, if we hope to have the shining of his countenance on our souls.

III. "The communion of the Holy Spirit" is the third great blessing. As the Father originates and the Son executes, it is the part of the Spirit so to communicate himself as to modify, and change, and form his subjects. He is compared to the wind, which diffuses itself over, and comes into contact with, every part of the creation. He dwells in the hearts of Christians as an internal principle, the principle of a second nature, possessing the mind as a temple of the Spirit. God walks in his people; He becomes their God, and they become his children by the influence of his Spirit. As Christ purchased all Divine blessings, so the Spirit dispenses the things of Christ. As Christ glorifies the Father, so the Spirit glorifies Christ: He is the vicegerent and deputy of Christ, as Christ of the Father. He glorifies, not himself, but Christ, and, in Christ, God. Between the Spirit and believers there subsists a connexion even more immediate than

between Christ and believers; for "if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of Christ's," where the Spirit of Christ does not mean primarily the temper of Christ, though it includes this by inference, but it denotes the Spirit of God, which is also the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit is the agent of all those effects which prepare the soul for glory.

Let it be remembered here, that a suitable walk is required of those who would enjoy the fellowship of the Spirit. We must walk tenderly with Him, and be careful not, by resistance, to grieve Him: if we sadden this comforter, where shall we hope to find comfort? Surely those who have ever tasted of his consolations will never give them up for "a mess of pottage," for a momentary sensual gratification. Attend to his small voice (the Word of God is his voice); yield yourself to be led by Him, as the sons of God are led. Have you ever, my dear brethren, enjoyed his consolations? Break not from his holy bonds! forsake not the footsteps of this Divine Monitor! listen to his gentle intimations and persuasions! and you shall find Him draw nearer and nearer to your souls: "For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

Let one or two remarks be added in conclusion of this subject: and,

1. In the text we have a distinct mention of three Divine persons. None will deny that the Father and the Son are persons; it is reasonable to conclude that the Spirit is also such; but if any doubt this view of the text before us, let him advert to the baptismal form: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." What can a name there be supposed to designate unless a person? Here, the "grace of Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit," could never have been placed in such a close juxtaposition with the "love of God," if, as some have supposed, there were an infinite distance between them.

2. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a mere speculative mystery. Each of the Divine persons has his office in the economy of redemption, and this gives us an idea of the grandeur and dignity of that redemption, in the economy of which there is such a co-operation; the Father devising it, the Son executing, the Spirit applying. And the persons are distinctly named in the New Testament, probably that we may be able the more clearly to trace the plan. This great mystery appears, indeed, to have been obscurely revealed under the Old Testament, in the Hebrew name of Deity, *Elohim;* a name denoting plurality, as used in the first chapter of the Bible, where we read that "God (Elohim) said, Let *us* make man in *our* image:" but the full disclosure of the doctrine of the Trinity was reserved for the gospel.

How solemn and august the work of preparing a soul for glory amid this state of sinfulness and wo, when each person of the Godhead has his own peculiar part in that work to execute! Be-

yond a doubt, the sanctification of the Church is the greatest work of God with which we are acquainted; that work, in which the counsels of eternity are exhausted; in which the merit of the Son and the energy of the Spirit are employed; that work, in the contrivance and completion of which all the Deity is busied, and by which new scenes of glory are opened to the soul. What are the distinctions of earth, what the honours of thrones compared with the dignity of the humblest among those who are "born, not of blood, not of man, but born of God!" those who are called to be "heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ!"

What manner of persons, then, ought such to be in their conduct! what purity, what self-denial, what elevation of views and desires may be expected of such! How clear should we make it to the world that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him! Let us see, my brethren, that we are consistent witnesses to the truth which we profess; let us bind the reproach of the cross, as a diadem, upon us; let us constantly lift up our hearts to the Lord, that He would fulfil in us all his will, and the work of faith with power; that we become more sanctified by the Spirit, more victorious in every trial, more dead to the world, as those whose life is hid with Christ in God; that when He, who is our life, shall appear, we may appear with Him in glory, and may be favoured to hear those words of Divine approval, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord!"

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

DISCOURSES.

I.*

CHAP. i., 1–11: Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

THIS epistle was written from Rome by the Apostle Paul during his imprisonment by the Emperor Nero.

The Philippians seem to have had a great share of the affections of the apostle, and their attachment to him appears to have been remarkably steady.

If there were any factions in the Church of Philippi, as some have imagined, they do not appear to have got to such a height as to have affected their attachment towards him.

When the apostle was imprisoned at Rome, we are informed, they sent presents to support him in his affliction, and to preserve him from the indigence to which he might otherwise have been reduced.

They were thus partakers of the afflictions of the gospel, and they partook of its grace. This he expresses in the latter part of this epistle, commending them for exerting themselves for his support when others did not: "No church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only." The epistle is addressed to them by Paul and Timotheus. This, I suppose, was adopted from respect, and in order to take off the egotism that might otherwise have appeared in this and other of his epistles.

First. We shall notice the inscription and the salutation, which were agreeable to the other epistles on like occasions. *Secondly.* His gratitude for their participation in the blessings of the gospel; and, *Thirdly,* His prayer for their farther participation.

1st. The inscription of this epistle, "from Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi (without distinction), with the bishops and deacons."

"To the saints." Those who have been purified by the Spirit from the influence of worldly lust, and were solemnly devoted to God by baptism, and separated from all others. However the term saint may have been applied in derision and ridicule in modern times, yet

* These Discourses were delivered at Cambridge in 1801 and 1802; and the whole of them are printed from the short-hand notes of John Greene, Esq.

we see it was adopted by the Apostle Paul as a mark of honourable distinction. Let us never be ashamed of that in which the Christian world has ever gloried, the spirit and temper of saints. Observe, first, he addresses the Church, then the bishops and deacons. The body of the common people, in primitive times, decided upon all weighty matters that arose in the Church. It is evident from the New Testament that the terms bishops and deacons, or pastors and deacons, comprehended all the teachers at that time found in the Church; and that the distinction arose afterward between the bishops and pastors; certainly, if there had been any other order or orders, they would not have been overlooked or neglected by the Apostle Paul in his various epistles.

The salutation is very short, but extremely comprehensive: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle was not intent upon their worldly prosperity; for he knew it was a stated and an appointed condition, that through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God. "Grace from God our Father," or favour, implying pardon, acceptance, justifying and glorifying grace; and who is there, my brethren, that cannot be satisfied with this? "Peace." This was the term in which they were accustomed to salute each other in their common meetings, and in the streets and market-places. This was sanctified by Jesus Christ. He said, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you (by compliment): let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." They were accustomed to express all this by the term peace; and the best thing we can wish for our fellow-Christians and for ourselves is, that "peace may be multiplied." We should wish them an increase of all blessings, but especially spiritual blessings, as the most important; and we should be most anxious to partake of these ourselves.

2dly. The apostle's gratitude and thanksgiving, verse 3: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." 4th and 5th: "Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." This is the substance of his gratitude; his heart is affected with emotions of joy on their account. Here, my brethren, is true benevolence; this enlarges the heart and multiplies the sources of joy far more than selfishness; this is the great secret of true happiness: while the other excludes from the soul all those fine emotions of kindness and generosity, this expands the heart; none rejoiced but he rejoiced also. The apostle lost sight of his individual sufferings in his attachment to the whole Church of God; they had a fellowship with him in the gospel, which was the riches of the Gentiles.

This fellowship melted every other distinction. By professing one common faith, Christianity unites mankind together, and makes them brethren. As national and commercial possessions, territories, and pursuits frequently prejudice and divide men, and kindle animosities, and occasion the shedding of blood where they have a common or separate interest, this tends to unite, to teach mankind to feel them-

selves as members of one family, for it is wide enough to receive the whole human race. Observe, "This fellowship continued from the first day until now."

The seed of the kingdom which the apostle had sown abided in them: they had received the gospel in the midst of great persecution; notwithstanding that, he says, the Philippians received it in love. "It is he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

It was not like that seed which springs up in a shallow soil, and then withers away. He knew that if they were partakers of this blessing, whatever persecutions or calamities they were exposed to, their great interest was secure, and that they were comprehended in this promise, "All things shall work together for their good." Again, verse 6th: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

The apostle, reflecting on their state and condition, expresses a cheerful and well-grounded confidence that Jesus Christ would not forsake and abandon his own work; it was a good likeness, which was to be completed at his appearance.

The principle of religion in the heart, or that renewal of the soul which is effected in all true Christians, is here called "a good work in them." It is said of Abijah, that there was some good thing found in him towards the Lord God of Israel. So real religion in the heart is a good work; not a self-created work, but Jesus Christ, by the influence of his Spirit, forms it in us. It is a growing work. It advances and enlarges itself as the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which continually increases. It is a little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump. "Until the day," or that day to which this looks forward; it is called the day of Jesus Christ; then true Christians will be found entirely like Him, and this work will be complete. It expands towards that day; it is a spring of living water springing up unto everlasting life. How careful, my brethren, should we be to examine our own hearts, whether we know, by experience, what it is to be renewed in our minds; and next to this, that we are pressing forward.

Verse 7th: "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."

The Philippians were lodged in the heart of the apostle, and his poverty and sufferings excited their zealous attention, though removed from them by his bodily presence. The imprisonment and persecution of the apostles were, in the hands of God, the means of purifying the Christian churches. It was a wind that purged the Christian floor. Some, it appears, were offended; but to those who did receive the truth in the love of it, it was a living principle, full of greater regard to the apostles on this very account, so that in this sense the persecution and blood of the martyrs were the seed of the Church. Again, verse 8th: "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." The apostle wished to impart that

fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace that Jesus Christ himself left as a legacy to the Church.

Lastly. We have the very affectionate prayer of the apostle for the Philippians. Verse 9th: "And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." Verse 10th: "That ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

He first prays that their love may abound yet more and more. That which unites us to Jesus Christ is love: "And hereby," he says, "ye shall know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

The obedience of a Christian is distinguished from all other kinds, by its proceeding from a principle of love—love to God and love to man. Verse 9th: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge," viz., in that which is founded on a true apprehension and reason for love, "and in all judgment;" not merely enlightened, but in harmony, or with the fitness of things in judgment and feeling, in opposition to extravagance and folly. Verse 10th: "That ye may approve things that are excellent," or try the things that differ, viz., to distinguish the excellence of Christianity from every counterfeit, and hold fast your crown: "That ye may be sincere and without offence." The apostle's first desire was, that they might be Christians, and the next, that they might be exemplary Christians; not only free from scandalous offences and from reproach, but to adorn the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and shine as lights in the world. These, my brethren, are among the excellences and virtues of Christianity, and it is of the very essence of piety "to be pressing forward to the prize and mark of our high calling—not to account ourselves as having already attained, or as already perfect."

First. See that your profession is sincere, in opposition to hypocrisy, that ye may be truly keeping his sayings and bringing forth much fruit, that your heavenly father may be glorified.

Verse 11th: "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness."

Holiness is the fruit which Christianity produces in the mind. This is the proper ornament of the Christian. As you would think nothing of a tree without fruit, so riches, dress, and honours are mere adventitious distinctions and ornaments. They are nothing to a Christian—there is nothing to be compared to fruit. He is the best man, and the best Christian, that acts most upon evangelical principles in bringing forth good fruit. We are too much accustomed to examine our Christianity by our profession and feelings, but let us examine it by our fruit.

Our Lord says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." You know that the fruit is the last thing which makes its appearance on the tree; without this fruit, "without holiness, no man can see the Lord."

He that is most desirous to serve God and to benefit his fellow-creatures, has the most fruit and the most of Christianity.

These fruits of righteousness are said to be by Jesus Christ. If we are deficient in any sort of grace or excellence, we should endeavour to seek it at the hand of Jesus Christ.

On the whole, this is, my brethren, the prayer of the apostle on the

part of the Philippians. How necessary on the part of ourselves! It was for those who lay so near to the apostle's heart; and are you, my brethren, wiser, better, or different from them? Would he not impress it upon you?

Remember, the truths of the gospel are eternal truths; like their great Author, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the grass: the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; the wind passeth over it, and it is gone." It will pass over us, and we shall be gone too, "but the word of the Lord endureth forever," and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

II.

CHAP. i., 12–20: But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

IN this part of the epistle we have a communication of very pleasing intelligence to the Philippians: "The things which happened to the apostle had fallen out for the furtherance of the gospel." We see all the events of life are here mixed.

Another consequence fell from the imprisonment of the apostle: "The brethren waxed confident by his bonds." Some, indeed, preached Christ out of envy and contention, supposing to add affliction to his bonds. Yet Jesus Christ was preached, and he rejoiced; yea, and would rejoice.

The apostle closes this account by expressing his confidence in Divine Providence, and that in nothing he should be ashamed, so that Jesus Christ was magnified in his body, whether by life or by death.

1st. Here is a piece of pleasing intelligence with respect to religion. Every thing else is unimportant compared to the advancement of Christianity. The apostle felt himself more happy in the communication of this than of anything else: "The things which happened unto me have fallen out for the furtherance of the gospel." This he knew would give them, also, great satisfaction. "We are, my brethren, no farther Christians than we can rejoice to see Christ magnified." The opposition and persecution the apostle met with had all happened for the furtherance of the gospel. At first it must have appeared very perplexing and gloomy, that so eminent a person should be confined; but it is the prerogative of God to bring good out of evil, light out of darkness: as it is the wickedness of man that prevents good, so God brings good out of evil. The bonds and imprisonment of the

apostle made the gospel a matter of public notoriety. Christianity was more known and talked about; attention was excited; an inquiry made, what that religion was that so supported him in the midst of his sufferings? It is not improbable that they would inquire who Jesus Christ was. What were the hopes and prospects offered to the converts of this new religion? Thus, God has overruled the persecution of the Church in every age. It became sanctified in his hands. It placed Christianity on an eminence, and excited a conviction that that religion, which thus supported him, must be divine. It is peculiar to Christianity to triumph in sufferings, as we noticed last Sabbath.

There was another effect, still more unlikely, produced from the apostle's imprisonment. He says, verse 14th: "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

Instead of deterring, it made them more bold and confident. This was a very remarkable effect. They were more ready to throw off every restraint, and to evince their attachment to the cause of Christ. But this has often been found to be the case; and, sometimes, those persons who have attended as witnesses and executioners have afterward professed themselves Christians, and exposed themselves to the same punishments. When they saw the firmness and the heavenly supports afforded to the disciples in the midst of these fiery trials, they found there was that in religion which would sustain them—*that* which nothing could sink; this induced them to throw off that fear and timidity so incident to human nature.

The apostle then rejoiced because men began to inquire about Christianity. The spirit of religion is a public spirit: it calls us to suffer for others, and, if necessary, to lay down our lives for the brethren, as Christ suffered and laid down his life for us. Verse 15th: There was a disagreeable effect produced: "Some preached Christ even of envy and strife; and some, also, of good will." Verse 16th: "The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds." It is melancholy to reflect that there were persons of this description; who they were we are not informed, but it is probable they were Jews, who wished to bind the Jewish religion, with its ritual, observances, and restraints, upon the Christian converts; a disposition to set up one form against the other, and, by disparaging the apostle's ministry, to increase their party. The Corinthians had much of this spirit and temper; they endeavoured to discredit his apostleship; and he says, "Am not I an apostle? Do not I bear about me the marks of an apostle?" It appears that there were some that did this in order to strengthen a party, and to propagate their own judaizing opinions. They preached Christ, but with a mixture of error; yet behold the noble spirit and greatness of mind the apostle discovers. Some preach Christ out of envy and strife, and some of good will. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, "whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

He was so intent upon the advancement of truth, that he overlooked the malignity of the intention in the success of the cause. It is thus, my brethren, that religion lifts us above self-love and party spirit, and leads us to rejoice in every opening prospect of prosperity, and of good to others, in all public events, and in every denomination. Again, love to the Apostle Paul was another effect produced; there were some that wished to support his character and credit; they did it from love and good will. What then? Whether from affection or envy, the work itself is good, and is advanced, and "I therein do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice."

He adds, verse 19th: "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ."

Verse 20th: "According to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." On the review of the whole, he knew that all would issue in his good.

Some have supposed that it was a deliverance from imprisonment he here mentions as his salvation: "Through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." He confidently expects that these overruling influences would still deliver him out of the power of the lion, as he calls the Emperor Nero in another place, but he evidently includes the salvation of his own soul.

We see, my brethren, the apostles continually united their own salvation with the advancement of the general good. They looked upon themselves as best securing their own happiness when they were promoting that of others. They considered they were so bound together that they could not effectually forward the one without the other. To preach the gospel with sincerity was a duty upon the Apostle Paul, without which he knew he should be lost. He was also intent upon that holy conversation, which adorns and recommends Christianity; on that holiness without which he could not see the Lord; and in that spirit of living to others which will benefit all around, and which, if imitated, will advance you the nearest to heaven.

It is, then, in religion, and in that alone, that the selfish principle conspires with the public; in everything else, personal advantage and aggrandizement are pursued to the neglect of the public good; so that the apostle was never so selfish as when he forgot it, and says, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; so that, living or dying, we are the Lord's."

This, my brethren, is the consequence of a supreme devotedness to God; this is ingrafted upon making the enjoyment of him our sole happiness and chief end, and when any thing comes in competition with this, casting it away as dross and dung.

Notwithstanding the opposition the apostle met with, he knew he should not be ashamed, for he was shielded by conscious integrity and innocence; and that Jesus Christ would be magnified by his body,

by the labours of his life, and by the fortitude and resolution with which he should meet death.

Having devoted himself to Christ, he knew that his salvation was secure, and he rejoiced in the prospect of the final prevalence of that religion which he was appointed to preach.

This peace of mind, this satisfaction with his allotment, was the consequence of having no separate interest or pleasure. Thus, if we devote and unite ourselves to God, and make the enjoyment of Him our chief end and rule, then all will go on well, and we may say with the apostle, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." It is worthy of remark, that the apostle knew that this dispensation would not be overlooked, but would turn to his good by two things:

1st. By the prayer of the Philippians; and,

2d. By the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

We see, my brethren, that, with all his attainments, the apostle was not lifted up above *them*, when he says, "by *your* prayer." How much more have we need to say, "Brethren, pray for us." The prayer of the meanest Christian in this assembly may procure, and infuse among us, the Spirit of God, beyond what we could wish ourselves; for with Him all distinctions are lost but piety and sincerity. We see he does not fail to express his belief in the efficacy of prayer. He knew that God would "withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly," and seek it at his hands.

Secondly. By the supply of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God, which was sent to supply the place of Jesus Christ, is, in a peculiar manner, his gift, as a substitute for the loss the Church sustained by his departure. He ascended on high, and led captivity captive, that God might give good gifts to men, even to the rebellious.

If we wish to have every thing turn to our good, it must be with the supply of the Spirit—the teachings of his Holy Spirit; for they that are his children are led by the Spirit of God as the sons of God.

We see in this part of the epistle what are the distinguishing features and spirit of Christianity.

The doctrines of religion might have been taught in a more argumentative and different form, if the Scriptures had been calculated to give us mere speculative knowledge; but they exhibit the feelings and temper of the heart. We see the writers of them in bonds and afflictions, in triumphs and miscarriages. These epistles represent them under every variety of form and circumstance, in order that we may learn and know what is that *one spirit* into which all the disciples breathed.

It is of very little consequence to have an acquaintance merely with the doctrines of Christianity, unless we have the spirit which all the apostles breathe in these epistles, and which has formed and sanctified the hearts of his chosen in every age. Do not, my brethren, read them only to know what it is they teach, but consider them with a view to the improvement and renovation of the heart; producing that sincerity, that devotedness to Christ, that heavenly-mindedness, which they everywhere inculcate; and let them penetrate your hearts and

make you ashamed of yourselves, that you should fall so far short of the spirit of the disciples ; for, unless we possess his spirit in some degree, we cannot be his disciples. Compare these writers with the celebrated heathen authors, in sublimity of style, in purity, in elegance, in dignity and delicacy of expression ; look at them with seriousness, and how low and little do the characters of these heathen writers appear, although they came into alliance with every thing that is great and illustrious in this world. But the apostles came into contact with God ; they touched the Eternal ; they breathed into his Spirit, imbibed his temper ; they partook of his image, and out of that fulness received grace upon grace.

Let us, my brethren, seek this renovation of mind. Let us not be slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises. Let us breathe after their spirit and their enjoyments, and very shortly the days of our mourning will be ended, "and we shall be with them, and with the Lord."

III.

CHAP. i., 21–30 : For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour : yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better : nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith ; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ : that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel ; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries : which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake ; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

THE Apostle Paul, in the preceding part of this chapter, had expressed his satisfaction with his present condition and his future prospects, arising from the conviction that all his afflictions would be overruled for his good, so that in nothing he should be moved. Under this conviction, he had no very prevailing solicitude about any of these events, for he knew that Jesus Christ would be magnified by his life or by his death.

We shall endeavour, first, to establish the meaning of the apostle in the views he had with respect to his life and death. He says, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." His life he considers as a means of glorifying Christ, his death as an advantage to himself. He was in a difficulty, driven by contrary motives : "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." He concludes with expressing his anxiety for the resolute behaviour of his Christian converts ; that was the great and chief solicitude of his mind ; that they might be firm, standing fast in the Lord in persecution, and fruitful in good works, so as to produce a conviction in the consciences of their persecutors, of the reality and certainty of that eternal reward which awaited them.

1st. The leading views he had of life and death. It was not as

an opportunity of enjoying pleasure that he desired life; it was not for any selfish purpose, but in order to advance the honour of Christ, to set forth his offering for sin, and his death, as the Saviour of men, and that he might be a fellow-worker with Him in advancing the salvation of mankind. His views terminated in the same object with those of Jesus Christ, in redeeming men from this wicked world, and in raising them above its influence. It is not usual to think this to be the life of every Christian; yet, though every man is not called to the same station of the apostle, every Christian is obliged to seek the same end, and to live in the same spirit: for as there is "but one Lord, one faith, one baptism," so there can be but one Christianity, but one practical religion, and they who are destitute of this spirit have only a name to live, while they are dead. Do not, then, conceive of these views, my brethren, as confined to the apostle. It is a very great delusion to think that, instead of this being the general temper of Christians, it was the particular temper of a particular man; for our Lord has declared, "If ye have not the spirit of Christ, ye are none of his." We have no assurance of salvation but what is founded upon partaking of the same spirit with the apostle, and it is that set forth in these words: "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord." Ye are not your own, but bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body and with your spirit, which are his. We are to devote ourselves to Jesus Christ; to look upon every advantage, talent, and influence put into our hands, as to be managed and employed for his interest. We are Christians just in proportion as we can subscribe to these views; and this ought to make many of us tremble, if not to despair. As we would wish to die in peace, we must be united to Christ; for without holiness no man can see the Lord, and they never can die in peace that die out of Christ; for to die out of Christ is to die out of God, and without hope.

The apostle adds, "To die is gain." Here is the personal advantage. The apostle knew he should then lose all his persecutions, all his afflictions; that he should be delivered from his enemies, from the temptations of Satan, and from the influence of those natural affections which he describes, "By the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit striving against the flesh, so that he could not do the things that he would." To part with his sins, his sufferings, and afflictions, was therefore great gain; he longed for death as the gain of a Christian. Death is the greatest loss to the men of the world, but to a Christian it is an entrance into all that glory which Christianity promises; it is the beginning of all a good man rejoices in; it makes him like Christ—to see and be with him, which is far better. That must be a Divine principle which thus transmutes death itself into an advantage, and it is this death, my brethren, Christians rejoice in.

2dly. Let us consider the strait the apostle was in.

Verse 23: "I am in a strait betwixt two." It produced a sort of difficulty, having a desire to depart: he was bound like a ship in a strait between two opposite even currents, with a desire to reach that haven of peace and happiness to which he was tending, yet it was

more useful for the Church at large that he should continue here. His benevolence dictates his presence on earth, his piety inclines him towards heaven: this made him in a strait.

"To be with Christ." This was the apostle's view of the heavenly world. He knew that Jesus Christ had promised that where He was, there also his servants should be: "Father, I will that those also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, to behold my glory." He values the friendship of Christ above all the world: to be formed in his image, and to be with Him, he can conceive of nothing higher; it is incomparably better than any station he can enjoy in the present world. An unwillingness to die implies a cold affection towards Jesus Christ. Nature has an aversion to death, but Christianity creates all things new. If your attachment, my brethren, towards this world be great, it must be cured by giving yourselves up more entirely to your Lord and Master. Let this be your only assurance, for every assurance not founded upon this basis is absurd and delusive; for it must be in an increase of devotion and holiness.

The apostle had a most tender regard and affection for the Philippians. He says, verse 26th: "Let your rejoicing be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again."

There are no bonds, my brethren, that knit men more closely to each other than the bonds of the gospel. These Philippians were engraven on his heart; their defection filled him with solicitude, their firmness with joy. He says, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." Verse 27th: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ," viz., accompanied with an upright, exemplary walk and conduct, "that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel." This was written in the prospect of his return to them. He puts it hypothetically, yet he knew that he should be delivered from this imprisonment and persecution; and we know he was restored after this, and visited the church at Philippi.

We see that there was one thing that lay nearer to his heart than any other, which was, "that their conversation might be such as became the gospel of Christ." Observe the stress he lays upon it: "*Only* let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." We are to understand this in the most extensive sense, including all domestic and social duties, relative and personal. The profession of the gospel of Christ must be a practical one; there must be something calculated to recommend it, so that others may embrace it. There is a suitability in all its parts to this conclusion: it is such as becomes the gospel of Christ. Holiness is so much the spirit of Christianity, that we do not possess any part of it but as we act with uprightness and integrity.

"What manner of persons, then, ought we to be, in all manner of holy conversation and godliness?" What a privilege! What a high calling to be the sons and daughters of the Most High! To be adopted into the family of God! To be crying, Abba, Father! How forcibly does this act in connexion with that command, "Touch not the

unclean thing." Having such promises, my brethren, let us "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

We can enter no farther into this spirit than as we hate sin, impurity, and disorder. This is so much the spirit of the gospel, that its consolations and meaning are unintelligible, but in proportion as we hunger and thirst after righteousness. "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ."

This was also with regard to their perseverance and final salvation. It depended upon their continuance in these commands: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." They were to be diligent, to be found of Him in peace; to do which they were to continue faithful unto death. Too many Christians are apt to look back upon their conversion as a ground of hope and comfort; but the Scriptures give us no promises but what are connected with perseverance unto death. If, after having begun in the spirit, ye end in death; if you conform to the spirit of the world, you know nothing of the spirit of Christianity; you have the name without the spirit; "ye are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting."

"Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel." It is by this means, only, we can allure others to the profession and dignity of the Christian character. It rests upon this, "that others, seeing your good works, may glorify God in the day of their visitation."

These principles, my brethren, will carry us to great heights in Christian virtue. We shall not ask how little of it we may have, but does such a spirit, and such a course of conduct, most become the gospel of Christ? With these maxims in our mouths and in our hearts, we shall be aiming to have as much of it as we can, and be continually dissatisfied with ourselves if we are not copying some new lineaments and features of Jesus Christ.

This, the apostle says, would be a source of unspeakable satisfaction to him. Their union with each other, and their steadfast adherence to the cause of Christ, constituted one part of this exemplary course. Verse 28th: "And in nothing terrified by their adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God." "To be nothing terrified by your adversaries." Having Jesus Christ present with the Father as an advocate, what was there to terrify them? They knew He was at the head of all, principalities and powers, thrones and dominions, being made subject to Him. That Christian, my brethren, who views Jesus Christ as the Lord of men, of angels, and of glory, how firm and undaunted may he look around him, and consider kings and princes but as common dust; for they must submit themselves to his authority, or perish. "Be wise, therefore, O ye kings! Be instructed, ye judges of the earth." "He will break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

This resolute adherence to Christ clearly showed that they knew they had an invisible protector; that those "potsherds of the earth" must be destroyed; for "wo to him who striveth with his Maker." This was an evident token of perdition to their enemies, but of salva-

tion to themselves. It was a foretaste of their future inheritance. Verse 29th: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Instead of their repining at the cross of Christ, they were to consider it a privilege which God had put on them. It was a gift "on behalf of Christ;" they rejoiced that they were thought worthy to suffer for him and for his name's sake. Why this unutterable kind of feeling and sentiment, my brethren? Because they believed in the friendship of Jesus Christ, and they knew that he had solemnly declared, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake: rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

They knew that, though all the faithful followers of Jesus Christ would be crowned, yet a brighter crown was reserved for them. They knew that they should reign with him, with peculiar honour and glory. They considered the sufferings which they endured with the Church on earth as an earnest of their elevation in heaven; that the degree in which they sunk in one was to be the measure of their elevation in the other.

Can we have the Spirit if we do not deny the world? Or, if we do not suffer for his sake, how can we be companions of them that suffered? They had witnessed the apostle's being cast into prison; and we find, by the closing verse, that this affliction still attended him, and there were no means of escaping but by appealing unto Cæsar.

On the whole, my brethren, how great is the importance of having these views in life, and these hopes in death, which the apostle here sets before us! As we must all die, and he has laid no other foundation than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ, let us often ask ourselves whether the end of our life is to glorify God, and whether we have any well-founded hope, if we were to die, that we should be with the Lord? This evidence lies in a very small compass. Is your conversation such as becomes the gospel of Christ?

IV.

CHAP. ii., 1–8: If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

IN this part of the epistle, the Apostle Paul most affectionately and earnestly presses on the Philippians some of the most important Christian principles and duties, such as a self-denial of their own motives, passions, and inclinations; because this was the mind of Christ, which induced him to leave the mansions of glory and blessedness.

He had expressed great satisfaction with them but his joy could

not be filled but by an increase in all Christian graces. He says, "Fulfil ye my joy," implying that nothing could make him really satisfied but seeing them advance in that divine life which he had been instrumental in forming in them. It is important to notice the tender manner in which he addresses them: "If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies." The whole compass of language cannot express anything more tenderly enforced. The words set forth some of those motives that every Christian must feel. We all know that "there is a source of consolation in Christ;" that in him "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." This is the first truth in Christianity.

Let this, then, move you to the advice the apostle gives, and as you have inherited a blessing, live in a loving spirit. "If any comfort of love:" this is a source of unspeakable comfort to the possessor. As hatred, malice, and revenge carry with them their own torment, so he that "dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him; for God is love."

Whoever has felt anything of these sentiments towards his fellow-Christians, viz., compassion for their failings and pity for their sufferings, has found a rich source of happiness in himself which will never fail. Those are greatly to be pitied who place their happiness in any thing separate from their fellow-Christians.

"If any fellowship of the Spirit." By the communication of the Spirit first poured out upon his apostles, they that believed in Him were made the temples of the Holy Ghost. As the apostle elsewhere says, "Ye have all drank into one Spirit." The participation of one spirit is the motive which forms a oneness of character; for a similarity of virtue is the true basis of happiness, and is always consistent with itself; and there is, my brethren, such a foundation in Christianity, by being made partakers of the renewing, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit of God.

"If any bowels and mercies." This, in all languages, is expressive of kindness, and it makes a distinguishing feature in all true Christians.

If there were any sort of affection and tenderness for him who had been so instrumental in forming them to Christianity, he exhorts them to cultivate every thing that had a tendency to cement them together, and to Jesus Christ as their common head. These considerations are all derived from Christianity itself. What a vast variety of motives is here! This distinguishes Christianity from every other system of religion; by touching so many secret springs of the heart, we are led on to perfection.

We need nothing more to attain the highest virtue and happiness, than these principles which the apostle lays before us.

Verse 2d: "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." It is unnecessary to observe that the apostle had more in view than a union of opinion. It was a union of affection, a perfect agreement of heart, more than iden-

tity of sentiment. This union is opposed to strife and vainglory, which he notices in the third verse. Unless there is an agreement among Christians as to the essential truths of Christianity, there can be no solid basis of union.

All true union implies a belief in the common truths of Christianity. There was a most entire agreement in the leading views of these Christian converts: first, as to the design of Christ's coming into the world; and, secondly, as to the nature of his death as a sacrifice for sins; this was the centre in which all the different parts of their profession were united, "having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." It might seem that such persons could not fail to be of one mind, who were exposed to the hatred of a wicked world, the objects of a persecuting spirit to Jews and Gentiles; but we see, that such is the depravity of human nature, that the apostles found it necessary to recommend this spirit in all their writings; so that even Christianity has never entirely done this. But, nevertheless, my brethren, whatever there is in society of solid regard, whatever of true friendship or real benevolence, grows upon that tree which is planted in the paradise of heaven, the fruits whereof are for the healing of the nations. This was, indeed, so much the case, that it was a common remark at that period, "See how these Christians love one another;" and by this, our Saviour said, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, by your love one to another." Yet their enemies knew nothing of that spirit into which all the disciples drank. This source of union they did not understand.

Verse 3d: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory." The apostle does not merely exhort them to abstain from strife, but let nothing be done with this *spirit*. It is not sufficient to know that our conduct is right, but that the spirit from which it flows is right. The holiness of Christianity relates to the heart, not merely to the external conduct; it addresses itself to the heart: we should, therefore, watch and guard the secret springs and motives of our actions, lest they be done "through strife or vainglory."

Vainglory, or the wish for applause and distinction, however it may animate the higher orders of society, would corrupt and debase that holy virtue and nature which Christians profess, and which never can produce any steadiness of conduct, because it needs to be noticed and applauded for its support. Whereas, a Christian looks to God, he fixes his eye on the recompense of reward, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt." "He is diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," "in singleness of heart, not as eye-servants or men-pleasers," but in that simplicity and integrity so as to approve ourselves in the eyes of an all-seeing and discriminating God.

Verse 3d: "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." You see, my brethren, how far the principles of Christianity reach. The apostle says, "In all lowliness of mind we are to esteem others better than ourselves." This must be understood with some restriction. We know that some of us have had more ad-

vantages for acting much better than others. Dr. Johnson says, "Every man is conscious of the neglect of many opportunities, duties, and virtues, that no one knows but himself." How many talents have been misemployed! How many advantages for improvement have you passed by! And if you were to take in the whole history of your life, it would occasion humility and contrition in the eyes of God. It was the part of the Pharisee to say, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are;" but the spirit which Christ approves is the spirit of the publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Christianity was never intended to destroy the different stations and gradations of life; but it is intended to destroy that arrogance and superciliousness with which rank and splendour are too often borne. As it teaches humility and submission to the poor, so it teaches humanity, gentleness, and compassion to the rich. In this respect, it merges all distinctions; that the rich man should not glory in his riches, but rejoice in that he is brought low; and the poor in that he is made rich; that he who glorieth may glory only in the Lord. Let us examine ourselves how much the world can discern in us of this spirit—if they can see any difference? If not, what do we more than others?

The next virtue the apostle recommends is that of disinterestedness of a man's own views and conduct in the sight of others, or a denial of the spirit of selfishness. Selfishness is the copious source of all vice, if not the very essence of vice. He says, verse 4th: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." When men are estimating their own virtue and attainments, they look at others. In one point of view they always keep their eye on themselves, but in another they fix it on others. For example, Christianity teaches us to consider ourselves but as drops in the ocean of being. This is expressed in a very striking manner in these words: "Look not every man on his own things, but also on the things of others." Are you attentive to your own character and interests? Cultivate the same solicitude for the character and interests of others. Have you a worldly interest to manage? Have you children to support—servants to maintain? So have others. Or look to the next cottage of the poor man, who has no servants, and to whom you may extend relief. Would you wish to confine yourself within your own bosom? Consider who hath made you and them of one flesh and of one blood. Promote your own interest and your own character upon the same principles you would those of others: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also so to them." If we do not this, our Christianity, if it can be so called, is a mockery and insult in the sight of God and man. The apostle next sets before us the great fact of Christ's condescension.

Verse 5th: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The condescension of Christ is represented in all its different stages: from the glory he possessed with the Father before all worlds, to the taking on Him our nature; from his life of suffering and benevolence, to his expiring on the cross. All was disinterested love and benevolence; dying for his enemies, though raised from the dead,

and now reigning for their benefit. "For our sakes He became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich:" though possessed of all things, he stripped himself of all, that He might invest us with his glory.

Verse 6th: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." This is very remarkable, "Who being in the form of God," that is, being vested with the power and prerogatives of God. Surely the apostle placed him at an infinite distance from the creature! He adds, "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." There are two renderings of this passage. He did not catch at, or eagerly aspire to display the prerogatives of God, or He was not tenacious of them; but made himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. The apostle speaks of it as an astonishing instance of the condescension of Christ. Unless, therefore, my brethren, He was this Divine person the apostle states, there was no kind of condescension in being found in fashion as a man; because, if He was a mere man (as some assert), to aspire to be equal with God would have been madness. The whole force of the apostle's reasoning, if there be any meaning in language, is this, that there was some such greatness and glory in Christ before he came into our world; that He did not eagerly retain, or hold the prerogatives of God; for He could not be said to condescend, or to stoop, unless He had divested himself of something He possessed, and for which He was before held in estimation.

This view appears not in any thing to affect the proper deity of Jesus Christ, but to establish it; for, without supposing this, there could be no kind of condescension in his appearance in the likeness of men. It is true, He had the power of working miracles; but that did not put Him in the form of God. Moses wrought miracles, but the Jews never took up stones to stone him, saying, "Because thou, being a man, makest thyself God." It never was said that Moses *condescended* to work miracles.

Verse 7th: "But made himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Representing that He gracious stooped from the throne of glory to the cross of suffering. Observe, "the form of a servant." All creatures, all men, angels themselves, are servants; but it was a condescension in Jesus Christ to take upon Him the form of a servant. He was made a little lower than the angels, and, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; therefore, it is added, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." He was made in the likeness of a man; but He might have had a higher nature, such as angels—this would have been a great condescension.

When He became a man, and dwelt with us, He did not take upon himself a high condition, but made himself of no reputation. He did not establish a dominion among men. He did not merely pass through our world, leaving a track of splendour and glory behind Him; but travelling in penury and want, acquainted with all the perils of cold, of hunger, and thirst, having nowhere to lay his head till He came to

that death, called emphatically "the death of the cross," in comparison of which dying on the gallows is not half so degrading among us. We are accustomed to associate something of dignity and glory in the death of the cross, from the Saviour's sufferings; but it was considered more contemptible than any other kind of death: it was, significantly, "the accursed death." This great stoop and condescension of Jesus Christ was not, however, without glory and honour; for from his cross he stepped to the throne of his glory, wherefore the apostle adds, verse 9th, "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." He raised Him from the dead: He placed Him on his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers: He put all things under his feet, that He might be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

On the whole, the design of this address of the apostle is to enforce a similar spirit on his disciples. It teaches them after what manner they are to aspire to dignity and honour. It is not necessary to invest themselves with a lofty spirit of superiority and pre-eminence; and if we wish to arise to that glory with Jesus Christ, it must be by humbling ourselves. There is no maxim of his so frequent as, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased."

When his disciples contended which should be the greatest, he took a little child and set among them, and said, "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." And again, "Can ye be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" or, "drink of the cup that I am to drink of?" If we wish, my brethren, to stand high in the sight of God, we must lay ourselves low in the dust before Him; for he that will be chief must be servant of all. Be assured that this obedience of Jesus Christ was not a capricious and arbitrary obedience, but because God saw infinite reason that it should be so; and for the same reason will He advance the lowest man in this assembly. Let the same mind, therefore, be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

V.

CHAP. ii., 9-16: Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world: holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

IN the former part of this chapter, the Apostle Paul proposed the example of Jesus Christ for the imitation of the Philippians; as his coming into our world, and taking upon Him human nature, was such

a proof of infinite condescension that it should cause them so to walk in the world even as he walked; for he says, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The apostle sets before them the gradation and steps of that obedience—from the throne of his glory to the cross of suffering—and shows that all was pure, disinterested love and spontaneous regard that influenced Him in this great work of redemption. He farther represents the great honour which God the Father had put upon Jesus Christ, in consequence of this humiliation; in and by this, to intimate that they who tread in his steps will arrive at, and be advanced to, the same glory; for "if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him;" and that Jesus Christ is in all respects the example of all true Christians. What great ideas, my brethren, ought these views to inspire in the breasts of those who shall share the honours of his eternal kingdom!

Consider how high Jesus Christ is raised. Verse 9th: "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." He hath highly exalted Him in his mediatorial character, so as to set Him far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named in heaven or in earth: to put every thing in subjection under Him; for He is declared to be Lord and head over all things. The extent of this dominion is represented in these words: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." By the first is meant all the angelic world; these are things in heaven, and these we are expressly informed are put in subjection to Him; nay, they are called *His* angels; for, when He brought his only begotten into the world, he said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

"Things in earth" mean the whole visible world. "And things under the earth," those that are dead. "For He has the keys of the gates of hell and of death; He openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."

In a word, the apostle, by this subjection, means to intimate the whole universe, and that Jesus Christ is in our nature placed and appointed to be head over all things. This is more fully expressed in the next clause. Verse 11th: "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." That is, there must be a submission of heart to his authority, an entire surrender of ourselves to Him, an acknowledgment of Him as the supreme head and Lord of all.

It is not a mere verbal assent, as in a creed or a formulary, but a devout acknowledgment of his authority from the heart; and in this sense, "every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Wherever the gospel was preached, this was one of its first fruits. So that we are informed the Christians sang praises to Him, and gloried in acknowledging Him as their Lord and Master; and this was accompanied with such a course of conduct as indicated their union with Him, and devotedness to his service.

The whole plan of Jesus Christ's sufferings, and death, and exaltation, is here represented as the fruit of the Father's love; so that all

terminates in his glory. It is one of the profound parts of his plan, that He was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and when He has finished his work He will give up the kingdom to his Father, "and God shall be all in all."

We, as Christians, have subscribed to this article of the Christian faith, "that Jesus Christ is Lord." If we live in the spirit of the world, if we conform to its maxims, or indulge the sinful passions of our hearts, we cannot be considered among those who confess "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father;" for this is only to be done by a willingness to be sanctified by Him, and by making it the *one* great aim and purpose of our lives to glorify God, whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve, to honour, and obey. If we thus believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, we shall be saved.

The apostle proceeds to some other practical exhortations. Verse 12th: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The Philippians had obeyed the exhortations of the apostle, and received the truth in the love of it; and in consequence of this they had been exceedingly earnest to secure his approbation. He says, "Work out your own salvation." There is one work on which men should be most intent, and that is, *the work* of our salvation—a holy solicitude lest we should fail of it at last.

God never intended, by the dispensation of the gospel, to supersede the necessity of human endeavours. It is true, we are not to expect justification as the reward of our obedience; but we are to consider the mortification of our tempers and appetites as essential to our eternal welfare; and, in the use of all prescribed means, we are to purify ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. There is an eternal connexion between holiness and heaven; we must be giving diligent attention to the commands of Jesus Christ; for He says, "If any man heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man that built his house on a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock." "If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed." A holy fear and distrust of ourselves in the Christian state is highly necessary, for even the Apostle Paul said, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, while I preach to others, I myself should be a castaway." Especially is this solicitude necessary in that low state of religious experience in which most Christians now find themselves, and a fear of losing our salvation will be the best means to lead us to ensure it. A holy dread of future punishment, and an ardent desire for eternal life, will lead us on in that narrow way which will eventually conduct us to it. A man who is free from fear and hope is deceiving himself; for our Lord says,

"Blessed is the man that feareth always; and what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch. Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

What an inducement have we here, my brethren, to engage in this work, for it is "*the* work of our salvation!" The motive might appear too great and extravagant, if we did not consider that it is for the salvation of an immortal soul, and that for eternity. That on this depends our happiness or misery forever; that we are either to be "vessels of wrath or vessels of mercy." How astonishing and great the infatuation of men, that they should ever be indifferent to this subject, and leave this work to chance! We, I trust, however, are not in the dark, "that that day should overtake us as a thief in the night." "Let us watch, and be sober, and gird up the loins of our mind," put on the whole armour of God. Let us "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." It is added, "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." The Holy Spirit of God is here represented as the source of all the virtues and graces of Christians; they are called "the fruits of the Spirit." The Spirit of God does not work in such a manner as to supersede human endeavours. God works in the heart, and the soul acts in compliance: "He works in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

It may be said, if the Holy Spirit must work in us to keep us steadfast, is it necessary that we should wait supinely for his assistance? No. But we are to work under the animating assurance of this truth, that God worketh in us. Experimental religion would otherwise suffer; that is, the religion of the heart. Suppose, for instance, we were left without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, that Spirit which says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them who ask it?" Suppose, I say, we were left without this assistance, how hopeless would be the condition of the best of Christians to maintain an habitual sense of eternal realities—of the power of the world to come! to mortify the influence of the present evil world, with its affections and lusts. I do not now speak of a mere moral life, but of that elevated state of spirituality of mind, which consists in placing our hearts and treasures in heaven—in forsaking father and mother, husband and wife, houses and lands, brethren and kinsfolk, for Jesus Christ. He says, "If any man love father or mother more than me, he is not worthy of me." Through what means are these sacrifices to be expected? They are the fruits of the Spirit, and are so disproportionate to any thing of our own, that any man must despair, if he were not to depend upon the Holy Spirit.

The difficulty of this truth is this, to guard it, on the one hand, against the doctrine of licentiousness; and, on the other, to place it in such a position as that there might appear so much of God as to leave no room for any thing human. And though the harmony and consistency of these things cannot be explained, where the one begins or the other ends; for they are by Christ considered, and repre-

sented to us, as a great mystery, in these words, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and ye hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" yet of this we may be certain, there is such an assistance of the Divine Spirit promised to us, if we ask it, as to cut off all grounds for despair; and, on the other hand, such a necessity of *working*, that none need despond who feel an earnest desire to work out their salvation. It is this just medium between hope and despair that should abase our pride, keep us active and diligent, yet humble; and so attentive to duty as if all were left to ourselves. Let no one, then, when he finds himself engrossed and entangled with the world, blame religion, and say that Christianity of this kind and degree is impracticable; for there are persons in this assembly who know the truth and are possessed of this hidden treasure, "The new name and the white stone which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it." Let me ask, Have you ever prayed for this Spirit which God hath promised? For He hath promised "to give his Holy Spirit to them who ask it." If you have not, you stumble at the very threshold of religion; that is, at this doctrine of the Spirit's influence, "that God worketh in you." Let me advise you to try this; seek the agency of that Spirit, without which all means are useless and unavailing. Read those promises of the word of God in which it is couched, then you will feel a gentle movement in your souls that shall engage you to shake off your fetters, and to wonder that you should have been so long enslaved and dead to every thing spiritual and Divine: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying Abba, Father."

What an astonishing honour, my brethren, is this to frail, sinful dust! That God should work in us, to make us the temples of the Holy Ghost—a habitation of God through the Spirit! to condescend to work *in us!* "Lo, the heaven of heavens is not clean in his sight, and cannot contain Him, and He chargeth his angels with folly!" "And will God, in very deed, dwell with us?" When we consider the vanity of our thoughts, as well as the impurity and sinfulness of our lives, is it not astonishing that God should dwell with us? This, however, is the dignity of a Christian; it makes him holy, he becomes a priest to God, to offer spiritual sacrifices, and he chooses those things which are of God.

Verse 14th: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." The apostle was always intent upon the Christian converts observing such a conduct and mode of behaviour as would *adorn* the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. "Walking wisely towards them who are without;" "that others, seeing their good works, might glorify God in the day of their visitation." As if he had said, competition for pre-eminence, secret grudgings, and contentions in the management of their affairs, would only assimilate them to the men of the world, who have their portion in this life.

Therefore, he adds, verse 15th, "That ye may be blameless and

harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." What a great character is here set forth! The apostle is not afraid of reminding them of their privileges as Christians, and in tracing them all to the free grace and benignity of Divine mercy; there is nothing in this to elevate them, or to give them a haughty sense of superiority; for it was a communication of free grace, so that no flesh could glory in his presence.

Again, they were to walk as children of God; and if "the sons of God" were, indeed, to descend to this earth, what majesty, what dignity, what elevation, what purity, should we behold in them! You, as Christians, are exhorted to attain to that spirit, for the apostle says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." You are adopted into the same family of God—you have that same spirit within you. Walk, therefore, as "the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

Verse 16th: "Holding forth the word of life." This is in allusion to a lamp that is large and splendid; for so is the word of God exhibited in the conduct of true Christians, and diffused by our spirit and temper. Christians do not shine by any light of their own, but it is a borrowed light; it is by that spirit and temper which is formed by the word of God—this makes them shine as "sons of God." In consequence of this, they exhibit to men the way of salvation, they point the way to happiness, they show the vanity of worldly pursuits, and in the spirit of the patriarchs, who sought another country, even a heavenly, they condemn the world, and thus become the "heirs of righteousness through faith."

You see, my brethren, how essential it is that Christianity should penetrate your hearts. It is not merely assuming the name, and calling yourselves Christians, either as churchmen or Dissenters, which makes "you shine as lights in the world;" for these, in comparison, are contemptible distinctions. But it teaches us such a proper estimate of all human good, such moderation and meekness, as shall fit us for the inheritance of the saints in life. This is effected by the word of God, sanctifying us throughout. Our Saviour prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." I have consecrated them to be mine, even as thou has sanctified me; they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Our example, my brethren, cannot be indifferent; it will either be a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death; it will either bring great reproach or honour on the gospel. "Let your light, then, so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify our heavenly Father who is in heaven."

VI.

CHAP. ii., 17–30: Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me. But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly. Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service towards me.

IN the former part of this chapter, the apostle had been communicating some practical truths respecting their conversation in the world: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;" that is, illuminating the world by the power of Christianity, which mode of speech was used in allusion to a beacon; he adds, that "I may rejoice in the day of Christ," or, in the day of judgment, "that I may not run in vain, nor labour in vain." This joy in the day of Christ, the apostle intimates, would be perfect if they continued steadfast in the faith; and then, if he should be called to sacrifice himself, he says, "I joy, and rejoice with you all." There is an allusion in these words to the heathen practice of libation —to pour a libation of oil and wine upon their victims appointed for sacrifice. The apostle means, that should he, in the course of his work, in presenting the Gentiles as a sort of first-fruits unto God, have to spill his own blood, and to lay down his life, he should rejoice in them all. Who can fail to admire the ardour and benevolence he shows on this occasion? He discovers a total disregard to his own interest, and to all worldly motives and maxims, and far from having any selfish views, he looks even at death not only with calmness and resolution, but with rejoicing. Verse 18th: "For the same cause, also, do ye joy and rejoice with me." How powerful must those truths be which enabled him thus to look at the cross, and an ignominious death of suffering, with joy; although he did not meet death at this time, yet, at his second imprisonment, we are informed, he suffered martyrdom about the same time with the Apostle Peter, and under the same prince, the Emperor Nero.

How impossible, my brethren, is it that such sentiments as these should ever enter into the mind of that man, under the supposition that he was an impostor, or engaged in a deception upon mankind! Were we more accustomed to examine the Scriptures seriously, and with a candid mind, the internal evidence of the authenticity of Christianity would have a more powerful influence upon us than any arguments derived from abstract principles. All those persons who have

made any figure as champions in the cause of infidelity, have, according to their own confession, neglected the reading of the Scriptures; they have not made any regular practice of receiving instruction from that quarter. Did you ever hear of any one person, who was in the practice of diligently reading the Scriptures, that ever went off into infidelity? A firm adherence to Christianity is founded, as an inevitable result, on the careful examination of the sacred Scriptures.

The apostle observes, in the next place, his intention of sending Timothy to them. Verse 19: "I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state." It was a great piece of self-denial to him, that he could not visit them himself. He had formed a peculiar affection for the Church at Philippi, on account of the great attachment they had shown to him. No one, it appears, had contributed to his wants but them; and he, therefore, could not be happy till "he knew their state." There was no one among them offended, and he did not burn; his heart was formed for a warm and expansive friendship; "he could not be satisfied," he says, "till he knew their state," their spiritual state; whether they were moved by the threatenings of their adversaries, or whether they held fast their confidence in the Lord, which had "such great recompense of reward"

It is remarkable in what manner he expresses his confidence in the power of Jesus Christ. "I trust in the Lord Jesus;" and again, in verse 24, "But I trust in the Lord, that I also myself shall come shortly." It is evident the apostle conceived that the power of Jesus Christ became extended after his resurrection and ascension; for principalities and powers were made subject to Him. The power which he received enabled him to protect and guide the affairs of his Church. This fact is necessary to be considered, lest it should confine us to a mere historical faith. We must exercise faith in Christ as a risen Saviour and friend, and this we can never do unless we possess a devotional sense of his presence and almighty power. "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world." We would ask, how can this be, if Jesus Christ was a mere man, and a partaker of no higher nature than ourselves? How was it possible for Him to conduct and regulate the movements of the Apostle Paul? To search all hearts? For he says, "I search the heart, I try the reins." To regulate all the separate societies in the world, complicated as they are with causes and events that combine, by their opposing influences, to interfere with the affairs of every other society? Or, how is it possible that He should judge the world? Yet it is expressly said, "The Father hath committed all judgment into his hands." And this power will be exhibited to the whole universe at the final judgment, which is said to be that of the Son only. There cannot, then, be any doubt but that Jesus Christ is properly a partaker of the Divine nature, and that a surrender of our souls to his authority, as their spiritual Lord and head, is founded upon clear Scriptural testimony.

Verse 19: "To send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state." Verse 20: "For I

have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state." This character of Timothy is very remarkable. The apostle declares he *naturally* cared for them: "who will naturally care for your state?" There was no man like-minded, who had that natural and genuine care for them which distinguished his character. Here is a great encouragement to early piety. Timothy, from a child, "knew the Holy Scriptures," and he had the faith, it is said, that "dwelt in his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice;" the consequence of this was, that religion became a kind of second nature to him; he *naturally* cared for the interest and affairs of others. There was a native vigour of character in him, which scarcely ever springs up in late converts. Although it is the essence of true religion to confer this, yet there will always be an obstruction in the disposition of those persons who are not taught, in early life, to move in the ways of obedience to God; for, not only are the difficulties of conversion increased the longer we retain selfish and vicious habits, and delay repentance, but for our making advances in religion it becomes more unlikely.

Verse 21: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." This was the complaint the Apostle Paul had to make then—I need not say how much it is at present to be lamented—all of us too much seek our own, *not* "the things which are Jesus Christ's." Selfishness was an early disease, and it is the great blemish of the Christian Church wherever it is found. On the contrary, we should cherish that true benevolence which embraces the wants and happiness of others, and makes them our own; for, upon the received and known principles of human nature, we could not wish our greatest enemy a greater misery than to be cut off from the enjoyment of this principle. It is ordained that man should not seek his happiness exclusively in himself. Surely, no Christian can compare any selfish gratification, or any thing else, with the pleasures of true benevolence, a sincere desire to advance the welfare and happiness of mankind, which always furnishes employment, lifting us as much above the general level of human nature as that is above the brute.

Verse 22: "But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." Timothy "served in the gospel," and his affection to the Apostle Paul taught him to conduct himself as a son to a father. How happy is that spirit and temper which permits and enables us thus to act! How refining and sweetening are the principles of piety, teaching us to look upon all men as brethren: some, especially, as our children; others, as our fathers in Christ! The spirit of Christianity is, in every part, a spirit of tenderness and love.

Verses 23 and 24: "Him, therefore, I hope to send. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." The apostle here expresses his hope of visiting the Philippians himself, and it is universally agreed by ecclesiastical historians that he did escape from his present imprisonment, and visited them.

Verse 25: In the mean time, he thought it "necessary to send to them Epaphroditus, his brother and companion in labour, and fellow-

soldier;" and he adds, "but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants." "For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, for he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." There was great danger as well as fatigue; he had to endure hardness in the service of Christ, and to minister to the necessities of Paul; and, indeed, "he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him." The apostle here recounts the kindness of God in relieving him in his sickness: "God had mercy on him." How often has God appeared for you, my brethren, when he has visited you with affliction in one part, and relieved you in another, mingling mercy with judgment! Though second causes may have produced your recovery, yet you should consider yourself as in his hands, as trying you, to see if you will turn unto Him and give thanks. Act, then, as if He was in this assembly; consider the resolutions you then formed of amendment, the vows you then made, if He would have mercy on you; for to lose the benefit of an affliction is a great loss; the design of it is to make us partakers of a Divine nature. We should be more anxious that afflictions produced right effects, than that they should be speedily removed; for the interests of the soul are the true interests.

Verse 29h: "Receive him, therefore, in the Lord, with all gladness;" because, for the work of Christ, he was nigh unto death. It was Christ's work in which he was engaged. How different from the service of the world, or from those who are corrected for their iniquities! How happy to die in the service of God! To have death connected with a series of labour in the cause of virtue and piety! Die we must: it belongs to ourselves to determine what sort of death we shall die. Happy, indeed, that man who can say with the apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course, and hence there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day."

Let us determine, my brethren, that if we are spent, it shall not be in the service of the world, in anxious and excessive care for the riches and honours of it; but in the service of God, in offering up ourselves to Him, a living sacrifice, in whose sight precious is the blood and death of his saints.

VII

CHAP. iii., 1–8: Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

As every person either has, or expects to have, some spring of joy or source of consolation, there is nothing which so much determines our character as *that* from which we expect this to rise. So, if we wish to know ourselves, we must examine where this spring or source lies. The great difference between the righteous and the wicked consists in what they seek as their happiness and ultimate end: "while many," says the Psalmist, "are saying, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou upon me the light of thy countenance, and I shall be safe." The Apostle Paul was very earnest in pressing upon the Philippians the right direction of the passions. He begins, verse 1st: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." The excellence of this knowledge he goes on to describe. There might be various other things from which they could have derived satisfaction at that time although the first Christians were strangers to many of those pursuits and engagements common in the present day.

The apostle wishes them to have their chief object of joy in fixing their eyes upon the great subject of the gospel. "Hence," he says, "rejoice in the Lord." Jesus Christ, my brethren, is revealed in the gospel as the subject of joy, and if we have exercised any trust in Him, it will produce this passion. The reason of that coldness, deadness, and indifference which many persons feel towards Jesus Christ, and the blessings of his gospel, is, that they are not of the "true circumcision," such as are here described, "who have no confidence in the flesh."

This joy in the Lord is strongly recommended in this particular, that it is an unfading object—a joy that will never perish. Every thing else is drawn from a shallow stream, from perishing objects; that, as we ourselves are passing on, we shall either leave them, or they us; and those persons will be indeed poor, and wretched, and miserable, that have never rejoiced in God.

"To write the same things to you, to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe;" this alludes to that practice of the apostles, in so frequently pressing upon their converts the same Christian tempers and dispositions, though in a different form and manner. These epistles might have been written in a more argumentative or didactic form, and it would have given them a great advantage in the opinion of some

persons, but this method would have been of no use unless the whole chain of the argument had been taken up; they are, therefore, written in that free and spontaneous manner in which men are accustomed to utter the feelings of the heart. We see the apostle's motives in all his writings, that, if possible, the truths of the gospel should make an indelible impression.

Your sanctification, my brethren, does not depend upon the hearing of any new truths, but on the repetition of old ones, "to stir up the mind by way of remembrance." The apostle has delivered a variety of truths in a variety of affecting forms, which, by proper application, will make us partakers of the same new and Divine nature. For example, the bread we eat is the same sort every day, so true Christians find the same truths equally nourishing to them: it is sufficient that they are those truths which are calculated to lift us above the world, to fit us for all the changes of life or death, and which the weakest persons may understand; "a wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein," being the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. He is the best hearer who can hear in the most simple and devout manner.

Verse 2d: "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." Though the Apostle Paul possessed that spirit of meekness which distinguished our Saviour, yet he saw that this was a proper time to utter some severe truths. There were false, Judaizing teachers, who crept into the Church, who mutilated and set aside the tenure and foundation of the Christian hope and calling, which was by faith in Jesus Christ.

People "of the concision" were those who mangled and tore the Church to pieces. Persons of a bitter spirit, whom he calls "dogs." "Evil workers," or of evil intentions; men acting from corrupt motives, and who are determined to secure some worldly interests. They wished the Christian converts to be circumcised, only that they might glory in the flesh. "But we are the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;" who affect no such zeal for the law as those who, if they were truly circumcised, would have known that Jesus Christ was the end of the law for righteousness. Those are of the true Church of God who worship Him in spirit, and rejoice truly in Christ Jesus. This is the character the apostle gives of the "true circumcision," and who only are the circumcised in God's eyes.

They were such as "worshipped God in spirit," viz., after a pure and spiritual manner, without supposing any narrow, particular mode of worship, in any one church or place, and that He could not be truly worshipped in any other way. Jesus Christ established a pure worship, that may be offered anywhere. A broken heart, a contrite spirit, this is what God will accept, and the offering up of ourselves to Him as his property: "For thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Instead of rejoicing in their extraction from Abraham, instead of

boasting of the antiquity of the temple, or being Moses's disciples, or of the sanctity of parts and places, they rejoiced in Jesus Christ, who was the end of the law for righteousness, and who brought in an everlasting salvation. They united themselves to Him as their Lord and head, whether as Jews or Gentiles. They observed no other authority in the Church, in matters of faith and practice, but that of Jesus Christ, and walked in Him in "newness of life."

Verse 4th: "Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." If a strict observance of the law was of so much importance as to lead them to think themselves incomplete except they kept it in all its parts, the apostle would have had a greater right than any one "to trust in the flesh." As if he had said, If any other man thinks and values himself on his Jewish rights and observances, as a descendant of Moses, or in his connexion with Abraham, "I more." Verse 5th: "I was circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel," viz., I was not a proselyte, not a person inserted or grafted into the stock, but a true original Israelite of the temple of Jerusalem, "of the tribe of Benjamin," which never relapsed into idolatry, and from which proceeded the first king of Israel; "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," viz., a Jew by father and mother's side, by persons truly Jews—"as touching the law, a Pharisee;" these being distinguished from every other sect, by being the guides of the people and expounders of the law. "After the strictest sect," for so were the Pharisees universally considered, concerning zeal, on which those persons so much valued themselves, "persecuting the Church of Christ," and thirsting for the blood of the saints, and hating them with peculiar violence, even unto death. "Touching the righteousness of the law, blameless." Observe his open declaration, that there was nothing in his behaviour which his own countrymen could condemn, nothing but strict purity and exemplary propriety. He tells us, however, in what light these things appeared to him after his conversion, although he had attained to an eminence beyond most of his equals and contemporaries.

Verses 7th and 8th: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness." Those things which were considered of so much gain and importance to him, and from which he expected to derive so much fame by the Jewish nation, he looked upon now with shame and humiliation, as they had caused him to imbrue his hands in blood, and to persecute even unto death. As to reputation and property, he "now counted all things but loss and dung for Christ," and made a wreck of his former hopes and fortunes. He was willing to be accounted as a sheep for the slaughter, "always bearing about with me," he says, "the marks of the body of Jesus Christ." He considered all as loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; yea, accounted them but dung, "that he might win Christ."

What was it, my brethren, that made Jesus Christ of such unspeakable estimation to the apostle? Because in Him he found a Saviour. Him that Moses in the law and the prophets foretold. The law, which he formerly valued, now sunk him in shame, with a rigour that made him tremble. It pointed to Christ, and shadowed out a deliverer, but could not infuse into the heart a spirit of holiness and adoption. What it had of an evangelical nature was contained in the Psalms and prophecies, and were figured out in its rites and ceremonies, but not expressly communicated to the people. This had been to him a source of self-righteousness; but in Jesus Christ he saw a Saviour. He had found the Messiah, who, by his sacrifice for sin, was the end of all sacrifices; he had met with that prophet, who had descended with the true Palladium from heaven; he had met with that advocate with the Father, which all the other deliverers and prophets had only faintly typified; he had met with Him who had made an atonement for sin, and who, by his Spirit poured out in such rich abundance, effected the *internal* part of his salvation. This was what the law could not do. It was calculated to detect sin, but not to cure it; to unveil to the conscience the misery of our nature, but not to remedy it. Christ had destroyed the power of sin, disannulled its dominion in the heart, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." The apostle, therefore, saw, and had reason for admiring, Jesus Christ. The sacrifices of the law were a standing testimony to Christ, for all bore witness of Him; but all were superseded by his appearance, because He was the substance of them. From the copy the apostle turns to the great original; by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness he now saw that the Sun himself had appeared, and left those Jewish moons to go out one by one. He knew Abraham had seen Christ's day, and rejoiced and was glad. He knew Moses had told them that they should see another prophet, which the Lord their God should raise up to them, which, as a reflection from the fountain and Father of lights, was to lighten every man that cometh into the world: "who made all things; without Him nothing was made that is made."

Verses 8th and 9th: "That I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law," viz., that Jewish righteousness from ceremonial observances, or that external righteousness which did not reach the heart or sanctify the spirit; but that justification which is by faith in Jesus Christ. On the whole, you see, my brethren, of what importance the character of Jesus Christ appeared in the estimation of the Apostle Paul. He speaks of Him, in another place, as the "only and eternal hope of glory." If Christianity had been a mere rule, and furnished only a code of morals, communicating simply to the Gentiles what the Jews were already possessed of, or merely showing us an example, what was there in it more than in the Jewish religion to be so highly prized by the apostle? What was there in his glory that eclipsed every other glory? Surely He must be the Saviour of the world, the only ground of our hopes, and the everlasting foundation of our happiness; "for in Him

are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." We may observe, from this account of the apostle's experience, that it is exceedingly possible for a person to have great zeal for modes, and forms, and ceremonies, yet to be totally ignorant of the spirit of true religion. There were those truths in the Jewish religion which were sufficient to humble and sanctify the mind; but the Apostle Paul missed these. Instead of embracing Jesus Christ in his arms, as good old Simeon did, and saying, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," he was exceedingly punctilious and pragmatical. Instead of "loving God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and his neighbour as himself," with all that humility of mind which a sense of the Divine glory and the requirements of God should have produced, he was dogmatical and precipitous, and persecuted to death all who differed from him. Every thing that was external in the Jewish religion was made his pride and boast. He imbibed its narrow and exclusive spirit, which valued trifles and ceremonies, instead of the noble spirit of the patriarch Abraham, who "saw Christ's day and was glad," which made him the father of the faithful.

Real religion, my brethren, is one thing; an attachment to forms and ceremonies, another. We may be very zealous for one particular creed, opinion, sect, or denomination, and with the credit and conceit of our own wisdom, yet be very defective in Christian spirit; this temper leads to malignity of feeling. There may be sufficient in such religion for us to hate one another, but not enough to cause us to love each other.

Let us, my brethren, "worship God in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;" be taught to value the great truths and promises of the gospel as all in all. Let us exercise the greatest candour and charity towards those who differ from us, placing no confidence in external morality, or in national privileges, or in our descent from pious parents; but let us seek for a *personal* religion, that religion which raises our hearts to God, and makes us "partakers of a new and Divine nature," which will finally lead us to the possession of eternal blessedness in the full vision and fruition of God and the Lamb, forever and ever, Amen.

VIII.

CHAP. iii., 9–15: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

THE Apostle Paul, in the former part of this chapter, insisted upon the vanity of depending for salvation on those national privileges and advantages for which, as a Jew, he had been accustomed to value himself, and on which to place all his hopes. He now sees the invalidity of those pretensions he had made on the ground of circumcision, and as being of the "stock of Israel, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and of the tribe of Benjamin; as touching the law, a Pharisee," which had formerly been his pride and boast, and denies their importance and authority, as a ground of justification, by saying, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." If he, who was possessed of these privileges and distinctions in such an eminent degree, counted them as nothing, those to whom he wrote need lay no stress upon them. The design of the apostle, in this part of the epistle, was to moderate and instruct a furious set of Jewish zealots, who were for enforcing the observance of their customs, rites, and ceremonies, as the means of salvation, on the Gentiles. Being set for the defence of the gospel, he took every opportunity of recommending the simple truth of salvation by Jesus Christ. That if they were justified, it was with a view to their sanctification; for if justification were by the law, then was "Christ dead in vain, and they were yet in their sins." The knowledge of Jesus Christ was of such infinite importance that those things he had counted gain he now reckoned loss for Christ. Instead of looking back on them with complacency, he counted all lost, all that he had conceived desirable as lost, when placed in comparison with this inestimable treasure.

On the last occasion, we mentioned some of the reasons why this knowledge was preferred by the apostle, the principle of which is, that in Jesus Christ he found a Saviour, and that He was the "end of the law for righteousness." He made an expiation for sin; He became the reconciler of man to God; that there was a fulness of grace in Him out of which they had derived grace. The Jewish religion had something of these blessings in types and shadows, but now Jesus Christ has taken away the veil, fulfilled all its promises and predictions, and become the end of the law for justification. In consequence of this, men become entitled to that righteousness which God had appointed through Him. This the apostle expresses in very significant terms—by "being found in Him."

Christians wish to be found in Christ at the last day, as an asylum and refuge from the wrath of God, when "all the wicked and the proud shall be burned up as stubble." They are now waiting for the Son of God from heaven, who hath saved us from condemnation. In Him they die in peace. In Him they rise in peace, and enjoy eternal life. He is as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;" wherever else they fly, they find nothing but disappointment. "The great men, and the mighty men, and the captains, will call upon the rocks, the dens, and the mountains to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come." But they who are united to Christ by a living faith will be found in Him, as an asylum, where nothing of the storm of that awful day will be able to reach.

Verse 9th: "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." We have here the manner in which the apostle became possessed of this salvation, in opposition to that way in which he had before expected it. Formerly it was by an exact and scrupulous attention to the law, by conforming his life to its precepts; but *now* he saw that by the law both Jew and Gentile were guilty before God. "By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified." By the precepts of the law of obligation, as contained in the Ten Commandments, and by the law of conscience, the apostle saw there was a necessity for a new covenant, and this was established by God, and ratified by the sufferings and the death of Jesus Christ. "The righteousness of God by faith," or the way of justification, is that way of being righteous which He has set forth "to all, and which is upon all them that believe in Jesus;" hence it is called the righteousness of justification, which is conferred upon sinners, and attained by faith in Christ. How important is it, my brethren, to be settled in these great truths, which are not as parts of the gospel, but the very essence of the gospel; without which Jesus Christ died in vain, and "your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins!"

Verse 10th: "That I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." The apostle wished to know more of Christ, to have an enlarged acquaintance with his character and offices; to know Him in the excellence of his person—to know Him in the greatness and unspeakable glory of his promises.

They who are called to an inheritance, naturally wish to make themselves acquainted with it. The apostle prays in another place for the Ephesians, that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened, that they might know what was the hope of their calling, and what the riches of his glory, in the inheritance of the saints. Verse 10th: "That I may know Him," for to know *Him* is to know God; to know Him so as even saints and angels know Him, who contemplate God through the beatific vision in the person of Jesus Christ. To know Him is to anticipate the glories of heaven, and to be "singing the song of Moses and the Lamb."

The apostle adds, "the power of his resurrection." This has a powerful efficacy on the mind; for, if the head is risen, the members must be risen. If Jesus Christ, as the head of the Church, is in heaven, our treasure is there, and our views and hopes should be directed principally there. Hence Christians are already said to be "risen with Christ." "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." This the apostle couples with the fellowship of his sufferings, in verse 9th: "And the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." The apostle means, that such was his attachment to Jesus Christ, that he was willing to have a fellowship in his sufferings, and to be conformed to his death, if by that means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. Severe as the sufferings of Christ were, he had such a sense of the glory which was reserved for those that followed Him, that he was willing to be a partaker of them. This was the case with many hundreds and thousands who were nailed to the cross and put to death. It was the power of his resurrection that worked this effect, and which made them willing to be thus conformed to Him; for they wished, at any rate, or by any means, to attain to the resurrection of the dead. By attaining to the resurrection of the dead, the Apostle Paul did not mean simply to be raised from the dead, but to that resurrection of the just which is unto eternal life, after the pattern of Christ's resurrection, as first in order; for we are told the dead in Christ shall rise first, and this the apostle was anxious to attain.

It is remarkable that he shows the connexion of this with the end, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after;" not that he might sit down in sin, and give up all concern about his salvation; for he knew the way to the Father was the way of holiness; that he who wished to share in his resurrection, must know the fellowship of his sufferings. "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

Our redemption consists of two parts: first, exemption from the punishment of sin; and, second, from the power of sin; these inseparably go together. This is made more evident where he speaks of himself as intent upon a race; so as not to have already attained, but I follow after. "If so be, brethren," he adds, "I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

"Not as though I had already attained." The main thing he wished to secure, it is plain, was something future; that he was saved by hope, and what is seen is not hope. If then, my brethren, the Apostle Paul, with so many visions, so many prophecies and revelations, as he was favoured with, and so many full and satisfying assurances of the Divine favour, yet says, "he had not attained," should Christians of the present day complain or murmur because they do not find their happiness complete? The apostle made this the subject of his pursuit: "he had not attained." A right sense of this is the great support of the Christian profession. The first principle of religion is, that there is a God. The Christian should regulate his virtue and at-

tainments by a life to come. While others gain honours, emoluments, credit, and comfort, in the present state as their satisfying good, the Christian is looking forward to *the end of his faith*, "the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This is the soul and principle of his profession, "not as though he had already attained." The latter clause is remarkable: "That for which, also, I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." It alludes to the apostle's conversion. God did not arrest him by the ordinary preaching of his word, but he forced conviction upon him, and apprehended him as he was going to Damascus, by a light brighter than the sun, producing blindness; from this the apostle was restored, and converted to the faith in Christ. Mark the design of it, that he might secure his eternal happiness, that he might make a vessel of his wrath, a vessel of his mercy; happy imprisonment this! which came through the mighty power of God. It might have been supposed, that if the apostle had been apprehended, it would have been in vengeance; but our blessed Redeemer knew no other force than that of love. If he put upon him the yoke of his profession, it was to save him from the dominion and slavery of his passions. He was formerly "free from righteousness;" a freedom that is fruitful in all sin. Now he was made "free from sin, and had his fruit unto holiness."

Verse 14th: "I press towards the mark." The apostle had made very eminent progress in holiness and knowledge, more than all his contemporaries. "In sufferings more abundant; in perils in cities; in perils by the heathen; in perils in the wilderness; in perils by the sea; in perils among false brethren; twice was he stoned." In zeal and assiduity he was never equalled by any of the sons of men; yet he had a deep sense of his own unworthiness and imperfections.

"For the prize of the high calling:" here is a beautiful allusion to the celebrated Olympic Games, where the prize was held up to the view of the combatants engaged. To this the apostle compares his course and conduct. He resolved to forget the steps already advanced; he considered nothing as done while he had any thing to do; he directed his eyes only to the prize. This stimulated him still to exert himself; and this, my brethren, should be our spirit; if we suffer ourselves to dwell with fond complacency on our attainments in our Christian experience, we shall go back in it. In all our attainments there is nothing so dangerous as to rest satisfied with what we have acquired. The apostle had a sacred ambition to outstrip his competitors, and with this disposition he could never sink into obscurity or contempt. If we say, with the Laodiceans, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," Christ will say, "Thou knowest not that thou art poor, and blind, and naked, and miserable." Humility is the great preservative of the Christian character. View the glorious excellences to be attained by faith in Christ, which is surely the only way to attain them. Animate your hearts by the prospect of the prize, and not gratify your vanity by comparisons; vain comparisons and ideal conceits would destroy your virtue and humility.

Can we be indifferent, my brethren, to this great object? Here are not certain kinds of adventitious honours and applauses, which soon pass away, but the prize itself. Here is not a fading wreath, but a crown—a crown of glory that fadeth not away! Put on the brow by Jesus Christ himself; for he says, "To him that overcometh I will give to sit with me on my throne, even as also I overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." "Him that overcometh shall inherit all things," shall be a son of God; for old things are passed away, and God shall create all things new. Let us press towards the mark, and remember that if we fail of the prize, we cannot return to the same state and condition as before. There is no alternative in this race; for if we lose the prize, we lose our souls, and "what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul;" and "what shall he give in exchange for his soul?" Do not imagine that a state of peace is any security for what is to come. There is no promise in the word of God but to those who endure to the end; none to those who have fallen into a neglect of the means of grace; we are told there will be a numerous class in that day of those persons to whom Jesus Christ will say, when they remind Him of having eaten and drank in his presence, "Depart from me, for I never knew you."

IX.

CHAP. iii., 15–21: Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

IN the former part of this chapter, as you will recollect, the apostle had been stating something of his own views and resolutions, and what was the great object of the Christian profession, a conformity to Jesus Christ; and that this blessing was to be attained by true believers, and consummated at the resurrection of the just. This perfection, though an apostle, he was far from having attained; but this one thing he did, "forgetting the things which were behind, he reached to those which were before." The apostle did not loiter in the race, but continually urged on himself this Christian attainment. He reached after more holiness, more duty, more spiritual happiness, and continually sought to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour; and this he sets for an example to the Christian Philippians.

Verse 15th, he says, "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Here is an allusion to those ancient hea-

then mysteries, into which some of the more favoured votaries were initiated. They were instructed in many a hidden meaning to which the world in general did not attain. Thus those who have advanced in Christianity, and attained to any enlarged comprehension of its truth and mysteries, are able, not only to relish, but seek after higher directions and privileges. Let those, therefore, set themselves to the highest degrees of Christian attainment, and if any be otherwise minded, let them be also intent upon aspiring after these; for if they are sincere, "God shall reveal even this unto them." Imitate the Apostle Paul in seeking those high degrees of excellence, remembering "that to him who hath, more shall be given." If his desire be sincere, his path shall be like the path of the just, which is like the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day; whereas, where there is only the semblance of religion, that which appeareth to be such shall be taken away.

Verse 16th: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." That is, attend, at least, to the rules of morality, and be careful to cultivate purity of life and manners, which are the first elements of religion. They who are destitute of these have only a name to live, while they are dead—dead in trespasses and sins. There is a common rule in the gospel—it is the same to all—to be keeping the commands of Jesus Christ, the words of Christ, his sayings, in which we are so to walk as to please God. Now, as every thing in religion is of a practical nature, it is the duty of Christians to consider these are *their* rules, and to walk by them. They are not to be satisfied by merely exploring the truths of Christianity, but in considering them, principally, as a sacred mould in which their hearts are to be transformed; to cultivate peace and unanimity, and Christian affection, and draw closer to each other. These rules are of universal obligation to all classes—to old men, and young men, "and babes." This leads the apostle to a melancholy consideration of the situation of those "who did not mind" these things, who did not take any care to exemplify the Spirit of Christianity, who did not walk so as if they had him for an example, or as those who were living exemplars of it.

Verses 18th and 19th: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." We see here, my fellow-Christians, a very awful description of those whose walk and conduct brought such disgrace upon their profession. We should not, then, be surprised that if, in the primitive churches, planted by the apostles, there were among *them* persons of this character, that some of these should be found in the present days—in these dregs of time—in these, the latter ends of the world, the farthest from the original fountains of truth and holiness. Every part of this passage deserves our serious attention and description. "Whose god is their belly;" that is, sensualists, who placed their happiness in the gratification of their passions. In the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle

says, "I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions, and heresies, and offences, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Also, in his Epistle to the Galatians, he represents some of them as exceedingly averse to the *spirit* of Christianity, and desirous of avoiding the cross of Christ, merely because they would not be brought to the necessity of subduing their passions.

"Whose glory is in their shame." It is certain that there are many persons in this Christian country of whom it may be said, "they glory in their shame;" they glory in an unfettered liberty of mind, they glory in being free from that remorse and tenderness of conscience which prevented them from sin in their better days; they glory in breaking through that weakness of mind (as they call it), in being affected by the sacred truths of religion operating upon them. It is not an uncommon thing for them to consider a want of piety, and sincere attention of heart to religion, as matters of glory and boasting, and to look upon Christians, who are really such, as narrow-minded, precise, and timid people, who dare not go their lengths, and throw off all restraints and the fear of God. We need not wonder that there should be found great multitudes who, without paying any attention to the precepts of Christianity, "glory in their shame," and are "the enemies of the cross of Christ."

"They mind earthly things." There is, indeed, an attention to the things of this life, which it is impossible to decline. "If any man," says the apostle, "provide not for the things of his own household, he is worse than an infidel, and has denied the faith." "He that will not work, neither shall he eat." In perfect consistency with this, there is such a thing as preserving the heart and mind in the midst of these duties, and "setting them on things above," on things of a Divine and heavenly nature. Being heavenly-minded in the midst of our worldly calling; and if this be not the case in a prevailing degree, "we are dead, and yet in our sins." We are exhorted to be "spiritually-minded, which is life and peace; and not to be carnally-minded, which is death."

The apostle tells us, "they mind earthly things." Their hearts were heathen while their profession was Christian; their language was like that of the Gentiles: "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Things divine and serious did not occupy their minds. They were more desirous to rise in the world than to rise to heaven; more intent upon the riches, honours, and things of this world, than to honour God, and to have "the honour which comes from God;" more desirous to live according to the dictates of their passions, than to cultivate "that holiness, without which none shall see the Lord;" so that they belong to this earth—"they are of the earth, earthy." True Christians are "not of this world;" as our Lord says, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world; sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth."

They are kept from the evil of the world, formed and moulded by his word; so that, though they are in the world, they are not of the world, "having their conversation in heaven, from whence, also, they look for a Saviour."

Let each of us, my brethren, examine ourselves whether this belongs to us. We sit in the place of Christians, we associate with those that are such, we bear the name of Christians; but this is sometimes the case with those who are finally lost. In vain will it be said in that day, Lord, Lord, we have eaten and drank in our profession of thy name. He will say, Ye were workers of iniquity; you bound up your hearts in your profession: "Depart from me, I never knew you."

Verse 19th: "Their end is destruction;" it corresponds with their character. What a dreadful course of life, my brethren, is that which terminates in destruction! However pleasing and prosperous their course may be in this life, though all nature were to exhaust its treasures upon them, yet such is their end; the apostle says, "Their end is destruction." He proceeds to contrast the character of true Christians with those he had been describing; for things are best seen by contrast. Nor is there any way more frequently adopted by the Scriptures than this, and by this method the difference and contrariety appear more manifest.

Verses 20th and 21st: "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself." "Our conversation is in heaven." Though the apostle was an inhabitant of this earth, his citizenship, he tells us, was in heaven, and he was once taken up to heaven, and saw unutterable glories, whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell. His views and prospects were habitually in heaven, his treasure and his heart were there, even while his body was in the present state, and this is the character of every true Christian; the hope of heaven occupies his heart, the magnitude of the prospect possesses and fills his mind: he resembles the patriarchs who sought another country, even a heavenly one. They "sought a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

As expectants of another country, it is to be the chief object of their pursuits. They are travelling to the new Jerusalem, "to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of just men made perfect." The reason of this is given, "because they look for a Saviour." Their final salvation is from that quarter. Whatever persons are most intent upon, it is natural for them to shape their course and conduct according to those objects. Christians look for Him to whom they are united, who is their hope and their life. "When Christ, who is our *life*, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." They look for Him who sacrificed his life on the cross for them; who now intercedes for them, and covers their sins with the broad mantle of his forgiveness. He said to his disciples when He left this world, "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place

for you, and I will come again, and receive you to myself, and your hearts shall rejoice." And they are waiting for Him—waiting for the Son of God from heaven. They watch for Him; their souls wait for the Lord, "yea, more than they that watch for the morning." This world would be all dark and gloomy if they did not expect Him. They direct their eyes to that quarter in which they look for his appearance; where He will manifest himself in great splendour and glory, to the confusion of his enemies; while they will lift up their heads with joy and triumph, because their salvation draweth nigh, saying, "This is our God; we have waited for Him, He will save us, and we will rejoice in Him." The apostle and the early Christians were thus "waiting for the Son of God from heaven;" their eyes were much directed towards that period; they calculated their actions with a view to it; and they who excel in this grace will have it recorded to their honour, that they expect no final happiness, no lasting consolation, except what is to be found in that day, "when He who is our life shall appear; then shall we also appear with Him in glory." Hence the apostle connects the full and perfect salvation of believers with the "appearance of Christ;" not merely to vindicate their characters from the reproaches of their enemies, but to recompense them. He will exercise his power to the salvation of both body and mind; raise that sinful flesh, "change that vile body, and fashion it like unto his own most glorious body, according to the working, whereby He is able to subdue all things to himself."

Verse 21st: "This vile body," as the apostle calls it, "is one which partook of sin; but Jesus Christ hath subjected the same in hope," with a view to that day, even the redemption of the body "from the power of the grave." It is called "the day of adoption" in another place, and then that vile body will be raised with every lineament and every feature; while all corruption and weakness, all disorder and sin, shall forever be separated from it. Nothing of this kind will be found among the blessed inhabitants of heaven, because old things will have passed away, and all things become new; for He says, "Behold, I create all things new."

Let us, my brethren, rejoice in this hope. Let us aim to have "our conversation in heaven." These are the true hopes of Christians, and they are the true sayings of God. "He that is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, saith, To him that is athirst I will give to drink of the water of life freely," as a spring from the fountain, as deep and perfect as the immutability of God himself; and these, my brethren, are satisfying and refreshing waters. Let us confess our weakness and our unworthiness, and may we be found among the number of those who are "waiting for the Son of God from heaven;" waiting for an admission into his kingdom and glory, that glory which is here set before us as the great hope of Christians.

X.

CHAP. IV., 1–7: Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

THE Apostle Paul, in the latter part of the former chapter, had been directing the attention of the Philippian Christians to the glorious change which Jesus Christ would effect in the bodies of the saints at his appearance; and He very properly addresses these views to them, as forming a reason for steadfastness in their Christian profession. Certainly nothing can tend to establish the mind so powerfully as an adherence to the glorious truths peculiar to the gospel. The servants of Christ will be richly rewarded, not only for keeping his commandments, but *in* keeping them; for it is written, "IN keeping of them there is great reward." They will experience an exemption from the gloom and disquietude of the present state, by being raised superior to all their adversaries. If, as Christians, our conversation be in heaven; if we are "looking for a Saviour who will change our vile bodies, and fashion them according to his own most glorious body," we ought, then, most earnestly to contend for that faith which holds out so many blessings to us. Therefore, the apostle says, "My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." He speaks, you see, in terms full of affection; for to most, if not to all, he stood in the capacity of their spiritual father; for though they had many teachers, they had but one father. He speaks to them with all the tenderness of a parent, encouraging them, exhorting them, watching over them, as his present care and his everlasting crown: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy." When the souls of men who have died in the faith of Christ shall be reunited to their bodies, and shall be presented by Christ to the Father, it will be a peculiar honour to have been employed under Jesus Christ, the great Captain of salvation, in bringing souls to Him as their Saviour; therefore, as undershepherds, we shall also receive a crown of joy, as intimately connected with our endeavours in this glorious cause. It is with a view to this important event that the apostle expresses such an earnest desire for the conversion of those over whom he watched. In another place he says, "My little children, for whom I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you." He watched for souls as those who must give an account. Immortal souls, my brethren, are always equally important. Eternity demands our serious attention. Let us see to it that the gospel be found effectual for our salvation; for it cannot be

treated as a subject of indifference. The gospel must either be a savour of life or of death to us: "It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for us," if we bring not forth fruit unto God. Let us, then, seriously examine ourselves, that we receive not the grace of God in vain. Let us adhere to this gospel, and count it our honour, our joy, and our crown. The men of the world may see no beauty or excellence in it; but if we are without it at the last day—if we want its righteousness, whatever be our profession, Christ will say, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment?"

The apostle, in the next verse, exhorts two persons in the Philippian Church: "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." There appears to have been some difference of opinion between them that he wishes to be removed, in order that they might be of the "same mind in the Lord." There is sufficient, my brethren, in Christianity to form a union with all its professors; sufficient grounds in which they are agreed to make them all of "one mind."

Verse 3d: "I entreat thee, also, true yoke-fellow, to help those women which laboured with me in the gospel." Some suppose "yoke-fellow" to be a proper name. There is a name of that kind in the original. He exhorts this person, whoever he be, to help those women that laboured with him in the gospel. We see, from this, that it was in the power of women to labour in the gospel; let none of that sex imagine they can be of no use in promoting Christianity. We see it was in their power to earn the approbation of the Apostle Paul; for he commends and encourages them, as "fellow-labourers with him." There are many services of benevolence in which women may be employed; to instruct children in piety and virtue, and to set them a good example, to administer consolation and relief in sickness and affliction, more particularly to their own sex, which duty more properly devolves upon them. There were, in the early churches, females employed as deaconesses to persons of their own sex; and there is, evidently, an allusion made to this class in this expression, "help those women."

If our hearts, my brethren, are disposed to do good, every situation in life furnishes opportunities to do it. If our sphere be narrow, yet it may be well filled up. Remember that the whole space which the aggregate of society fills is made up of little spheres; if, therefore, instead of usefully occupying these, every one contents himself by saying, What can *I* do? it will be seen that this very indifference will account for all that mass of vice and misery in the world which we so much deplore. We find nations are made up of cities, towns, villages, and families; so that the happiness and improvement of the whole represents the happiness, and depends upon the exertion, of individuals; because these are so many stations and parts, from which the aggregate of society is formed and made up. Let every one, then, consider himself as a servant of God, in whatever situation he may be placed, and seriously ask himself what course of conduct would do most honour to his Redeemer. Happy would it be if this were the case with us all;

for then our names would be written in the Lamb's Book of Life ; and though not recorded in earthly pages, they will be read from the Book of the Lamb, in the presence of the Father and his holy angels. Their obscurity in this world will be of no consequence, and God himself, we are told, will say to each, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

"With Clement also." It may be proper to observe, that this Clement was a person of great eminence in the Christian Church. He was the second pastor, or bishop, in the Church at Rome. There are two epistles written by him to the Church at Corinth, which are now extant.

Verse 4th : "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." There is scarcely any precept the apostle furnishes us so much with as "joy in the Lord." We have our joys as well as the unthinking world. He opens to them the true sources of it. Instead of that giddy mirth, which is as the "crackling of thorns under a pot," He displays the riches of glory, that joy of the Lord which is our strength, and will give us greater vigour in the work of the Lord. This will turn difficulties into incentives, make wisdom's ways ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace. Let those of you, my brethren, who are sincere in your Christian profession, cultivate, as much as possible, this Christian cheerfulness and joy. A joy that is not formed out of the fantastic hopes and vain amusements of this world. Endeavour to exhibit the truths of religion in a favourable light, by which much of that morose and gloomy temper apparent in some persons will be prevented, which may otherwise turn into melancholy, and bring discredit to your profession. You will find it will be much more conducive to your happiness to look at the bright side of religion ; for that religion which does not make us happy will not hold us long. Some persons contemplate the fears of religion more than the hopes of it, and thus become as slaves, "and are all their lives subject to bondage." We should go to religion for consolation in all the troubles and afflictions of life.

If any person present lives without God, and indulges in sin, and does not know but that, if he should die this night, he may lift up his eyes in torment, joy does not belong to him. But if we, my brethren, are living in no known sin ; if we are walking by the rules of the Divine word, and hoping for a future world, what is there, then, to discourage us ? "Happy art thou, O Israel ! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved of the Lord ?" Heirs with Abraham in all his promises : "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward." Let such, then, who do not indulge in any known sin, but are living godly and peaceable lives, "rejoice in the Lord ;" yea, let them "always rejoice ;" and this will tend to remove the impression that religion makes people gloomy and morose.

Verse 5th : Another precept of equal importance is, "Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." Whatever is excessive in our conduct exceeds the value of the object. This excess

may be attributed to two things—the indulgence of anger, and an over eagerness in the pursuit of the business or enjoyments of life. To both these the injunction and warning apply. "The Lord is at hand." It recommends, first, gentleness of temper to all around us. When we consider we are about to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and that every one is to receive according to what he has done, and every one is to bear his own burden; that we are waiting as in the antechamber of our Lord—how should we behave ourselves towards each other in all the feelings of kindness and moderation! Secondly, it applies to eagerness after the business, honours, and emoluments of life, or excessive enjoyment in the attainment of them. How forcible a motive is this—"The Lord is at hand!"—not to seek the fleeting vanities of time, when we are on the brink of eternity; not to seek those riches which are perishing, and of which we must so soon give an account. Were we seriously, my brethren, to think we must soon give an account of our stewardship, we should be far more desirous to improve the talent we have, than to wish for more, that we may not be ashamed when our Master comes. The scenes are about to close. The blessings of time may be detrimental to us, but they can never recompense us; they can never, for a moment, stand instead of pure, solid, lasting enjoyments.

Watch, and be sober, because the Judge is at hand. "What manner of persons ought we to be, in all manner of conversation and godliness?" "When the elements are about to melt with fervent heat, the earth, and all that is therein, to be burned up," what manner of persons should we be in all moderation? How foolish is it, then, to strive with too great eagerness after any of these perishing objects, which we must so soon leave to others, or which, from their very nature, will soon leave us! Yet you will answer, this was said two thousand years ago, and all things remain as they were. But is not death the time of the termination of all things to you? The souls of good men then go to be with God, and the souls of the wicked are banished from his presence. Besides, what is time to eternity with God? That eternity which God inhabits—that eternity which was familiar to Jesus Christ himself, "the Alpha and Omega," who looks at one day as "a thousand years, and a thousand years but as one day?"

Another precept the apostle gives us, directed against anxiety, is in verse 6th: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make known your requests to God." Be careful for nothing; that is, guard against anxiety. For we should be careful to improve the duties and relations of life. A man is required to care for "his own household." A care of this sort is absolutely necessary, and it is a pity the words were so rendered; but every one that knows any thing of the Christian covenant, will see the propriety of not being over anxious about any thing. There is every thing in the satisfying promises of the gospel, that rises up to condemn such a spirit and temper.

Latter clause: "But in every thing, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God." Seek, my brethren, repose

by prayer. If your mind be overcharged or overwhelmed with trouble and anxiety, go into the presence of God. Spread your case before Him. Though He knows the desires of your hearts, yet He has declared He "will be sought after:" He will be "inquired of to do it for you." Go, therefore, into the presence of that God who will at once tranquillize your spirit, give you what you wish, or make you more happy without it, and who will be your everlasting consolation, if you trust in Him. He will breathe peace into your soul, and command tranquillity in the midst of the greatest storms. How much are they to be pitied who never pray! The world is to them all gloom and disappointment; for *there* they see none of the kindness and protection of our heavenly Father. We do not wonder that the sorrow of the world worketh death, with the distresses, afflictions, and disappointments to which human nature is exposed.

Prayer is the sovereign, appointed remedy; use it, therefore. Try this medicine. In every season of affliction, whatever you feel of present distress or fear of future calamity, go to God, before whom none ever bowed in vain, and He will bend the heavens and come down, and fill your souls with peace and consolation—"with that peace of God, which passeth all understanding"—with a sense of his favour, a sense of reconciliation with Him, and an interest in his everlasting love. This preserves the heart of man in the greatest troubles, in the midst of the greatest cares, and from the incursion of ten thousand enemies. But if your hearts and minds lie open to the corrosion of care, what signifies how great, or how famous, you are? If you could silence the whole world, yet, with such a clamour and disquietude in your own heart, a civil war within, your passions in a state of riot and confusion, what would it all avail? And this is always the case with the wicked. "They are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, but continually casts up mire and dirt." But that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," will keep and preserve in the soul a region of light, in the midst of Egyptian darkness; and, were discord to ravage the earth, *there* it could not reach. Let us, then, my brethren, seek after this peace of God by prayer and supplication. Seek relief from that quarter. Whatever uneasiness of mind you feel or apprehend, go into the presence of God, bow your knees before Him, there lay open your case, there seek forgiveness through Christ, as your mediator. Spread before Him all your sorrows, "pour out your hearts before Him;" for He is the only being who will always attend to you. Friends, in many cases, can only shed their tears, and increase your sorrows by mingling them with your own; but He can give you light in the midst of darkness. He can give you peace and eternal happiness "Let us, then, make all our requests known to Him."

XI.

CHAP. iv., 8, 9 : Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.

THE apostle, after his usual manner, has in this chapter, and in the latter part of this epistle, been comprising some of the most important duties of Christianity. He has been endeavouring to inculcate the great doctrines of Christianity, and then to deduce therefrom those duties and dispositions that should exemplify and adorn them. Like a wise master-builder, he lays the foundations of Christianity, and then raises the superstructure of good works. He exhorts the Philippians to "rejoice in the Lord alway," as that disposition would animate every other grace. He teaches them a proper behaviour under persecution, and a freedom from care and anxiety; directing, as a remedy to these, a serious and persevering spirit of prayer. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." That is, while they expressed their wants, they should not forget their blessings, for there are many sources of comfort remaining in the midst of many deprivations. As a farther encouragement, the apostle intimates they would find that their sorrows would end in joy; for he adds, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." That is, such persons who are exemplary in the discharge of these duties shall possess this peace of mind: a freedom from inward disorders and disquietude, and a looking forward to the coming of Jesus Christ as their everlasting judge and their eternal reward. Verse 8th: The apostle then adds, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

"Whatsoever things are true." This relates to our words and conversation. In the strict sense, it is opposed to every species of deceit; nor can there be any thing more contrary to this precept than wilful falsehood, or the suppressing of any matter of truth, for there is often no greater lying than in silence. There is in the breast of every man a secret monitor, and, as the occasions of human intercourse are frequent, attend, in all things, to its inward voice. Let it be observed, in general, that the great design of speech is to communicate our ideas to each other; its perversion therefore, must thwart its fundamental object. We

are not bound to tell all our minds, but to be faithful in every account we give. The apostle introduces this precept in another place, by saying, "Lie not one to another, brethren, seeing ye have put off the old man, with his deeds, which are corrupt." Implying that falsehood is a breach of our mutual, social contract, and assigning this as a reason, "that we are members one of another." If we consider what speech is, it will appear that there is, in society, a sort of silent compact, or mutual confidence, that the words we utter are appropriated to particular purposes and meanings; that they shall signify such and such things, and no other; therefore, if persons were to accustom themselves to the breach of truth, the whole use and design of speech would cease, which, in fact, is the great bond and cement of society. All lying is like poisoning the springs of the comforts of life at their very source.

"Whatsoever things are honest." We use the word now as that which is opposed to injustice. Here the word undoubtedly signifies venerable. There is not, however, any great impropriety in the translation. "Honest," as here employed in its comprehensive sense, is a sort of dignified manner of behaviour, as the word *honestum* signifies, from which it is taken. It stands opposed to a fantastic, to a light and frothy manner of behaviour, to foolish talking, jesting, and buffoonery, to the character of a scoffer, and to the character of a sarcastic wit. Indeed, it is impossible that wit, or the faculty of making people laugh, should be suitable to the dignity of a Christian, "an heir of eternal life." It is impossible that this faculty can associate itself with a grave, a serious, and a manly deportment, which is perfectly inconsistent with trifling and jesting. Nothing can produce this propriety of character so much as the serious consideration of the design of human life, the dignity of the Christian calling, and the great end of our being. Mirth, though useful at times to the animal spirits, yet, if it be made the business of life, will produce spiritual insensibility, and it may be said that "we are dead while we live."

"Whatsoever things are just." As truth is the ornament of conversation, so is justice an ornament as it stands in relation to commercial dealings. "Whatsoever things are just," then, as Christians, carefully observe; for nothing is more revolting than for a Christian to be guilty of injustice, or the want of integrity in his transactions. He may be betrayed into this as well as other sins; but I mean that that man who is frequently or habitually so, has no claim to the Christian character. Every thing in Christianity tends to enforce the practice of justice. The spirit of the law of Christ says, "Thou shalt not covet," and in proportion as we are true Christians, we shall think less of riches. Whatever tends to diminish the value of worldly goods, and to make them of less importance, removes us farther from the temptations to injustice.

We are required "to be dead to the world," to be seeking a better inheritance, a better country, "even a heavenly." On the other hand, with men of the world it must be mere matter of prudence, policy, and decorum, or the fear of detection: there is nothing else, that I can see, can prevent them from being unjust. But they, whose first lesson is to prepare for the judgment-seat of Christ, for such persons as these to be unjust, for them to sacrifice their eternal prospects, is the greatest infatuation that can enter into the mind of man.

It is impossible to lay down general principles upon this subject; but, be it remembered, in matters of prudence, *last* thoughts are best; but, in affairs of morality, your *first* thoughts are best. Where things are totally indifferent in this respect, we have frequently to calculate their bearings and consequences, which requires a long train of thought and reflection; but in matters of conscience God has not left us to such a process as this. He has established in the breast of every man a conscience, as a vicegerent, and whatever this conscience dictates or remonstrates against, at *first*, is best. You may silence it, you may upbraid its voice; but whatever, in its first movements, it condemns, ought to be condemned. Your endeavours to prevent it will be like labouring in the fire. Always, then, in matters of morality, trust your first thoughts; these will not deceive you. Persons are sufficiently selfish not to give sentence against themselves, and the conscience, like every other faculty, is liable to become darkened. Our Saviour says, "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!" It is putting out, as far as possible, the light of the mind, and leaving us in a state of abject wretchedness: it is suicide of the immortal part.

Again, it is added, "Whatsoever things are pure." This is the same thing which our Lord means where he says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Sometimes it is called "clean in heart;" as the Psalmist says, "Create in me a clean heart." It stands opposed to all moral impurity and to sensuality.

When we consider, my brethren, the singular character of Christians, that our bodies are said to be "the temples of the Holy Ghost," "an habitation of God through the Spirit," with what care ought we to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit! Remember, the impure are expressly excluded from the kingdom of heaven. The apostle, speaking of certain vices of the heathen, to which some of the Christian converts were formerly addicted, says, "Let them not be so much as named among you, as becometh saints." How much this is the peculiarity of Christianity, you need not go far to inquire. Many men of the world are guilty of the most shameful neglect of this important duty in their deportment and conversation; while true Christians are always distinguished by this internal regard to purity. Let us pray to the Divine Being for more of

this purity, that we may become the sacred subjects of his temple—that "God may dwell in us." "Whatsoever things are lovely." There are two ways of rendering this passage: whatsoever is friendly and kind, or whatsoever is lovely. The meaning cannot be very different in whichever sense we take it; for it is impossible for any one to be loved, unless he is friendly and kind. To cultivate the love of mankind, it must first be exemplified to them. There is such a thing as being venerable, dignified, or majestic, and yet not being lovely. A character for justice makes men respectable, and kindness of manner and an easiness to be entreated makes them lovely. A disposition to yield, and to give up our own fancies and humours, in things indifferent, is, in the apostle's words, "to become all things to all men."

Jesus Christ extorted from all the confession of his being lovely, not only by the greatness and benevolence of his miracles, but his reproofs were without harshness, his dignity was without ostentation or pride, and his loveliness shed over his whole character an evening ray of softness and beauty. This loveliness of behaviour, my brethren, appeals to the heart of every one; and to attain to it, let us set before us a character that is universally beloved, and degenerate as the times are, we shall not want examples of this kind.

"Whatsoever things are of good report." As to the moral virtues, all are agreed to give *them* their approbation — such as justice, truth, fidelity, and friendship. In all systems of morals, there has been a much greater agreement in the external duties, than in those which relate to the inward state of the heart and mind.

But Christianity enjoins those duties that have no foundation in any other system, but in its peculiar form. Attend, therefore, to "whatsoever things are of good report;" for the men of the world will not give their approbation to any virtues but what are of good report. For example, from a character distinguished by benevolence, kindness, or universal love, it is impossible for *them* to withhold their praise; and though praise or fame be only the shadow of virtue, yet the shadow always follows its substance. In business, or the common transactions of life, that Christian is essentially defective who has not a regard for the character of justice, truth, and integrity.

Conduct yourselves, my brethren, in your intercourse with the world, in such a manner that others may have nothing to say against you, except as "touching the law of your God." Happy those Christians who leave the world nothing to say against them, but that they are too strict in their principles and deportment! For it is, or will be impossible to escape this censure, where there is any serious attention to piety, and let us never lose sight of, or despise, that character for truth, purity, loveliness, justice, and the things "which are of good report," here recommended. The contempt of fame, or carelessness of a good

report, is the contempt of that virtue which deserves fame. It is said of "Demetrius, he hath a good report of all men, and of the truth itself." A Christian carefully cultivates those virtues which are of good report; but here is the difference between him and the men of the world—he does not do it on account of fame. If reputation follows his conduct, aims, and exertions, he will take it as a kindness, and feel himself encouraged and comforted by it; but it will never be his object or principal motive; for whatever depends upon such a disposition will vary as it varies. It will be a kind of a mirror, catching and losing the fleeting shadows around it. But Christians have a virtue that will thrive in winter as well as in spring or summer. "Whatsoever things are of good report," attend to them, but let it be for the intrinsic excellence of the thing itself, and as the means of doing them for God, and for the good of others, that you may glorify your heavenly Father.

Thus has the apostle given a short epitome of Christian virtue. Narrow views of the Christian profession, as well as of its doctrines, have injured it much. For example, those persons that have been intent upon faith and the doctrines of Christianity, have frequently forgotten the other duties. It is true, faith springs from the same source whence all flows; but you must be careful to "add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity." There are very different virtues. If we would be complete in our Christian profession, we must attend to *all* the virtues of it; whatever things are true, honest, just, or lovely, as well as those sublimer things which more immediately respect God and Christ, and heaven and eternity. The beauty of the Christian character is not formed so much by the gigantic size of one virtue, as from the harmony and consistency of all. Never, then, let it appear which virtue has been most approved by you, but cultivate *every* virtue.

You see, my brethren, the way in which Christian virtue, in all its parts, is to be inculcated and improved. With a view to this, do not always be thinking of the sublime things in Christianity. If we wish to excel in all the virtues and graces, we must observe the opportunities and exigences of society that call them forth, and the peace and happiness which they secure to us and others; for the language of the text is, "If there be *any* virtue, and if there be *any* praise, think on these things."

Let us set before us the best examples. The apostle, who had been taken up to the third heavens, with perfect propriety says, verse 9th, "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." Let us, then, set before us the example of others who have excelled in Christian graces. If you criticise their faults, let it be to avoid, not to censure. Aim at the most

exalted standards of virtue; for, remember, we shall always be below our standard. If your ideas and aims are not high, your virtue will not be high. Observe the Apostle Paul; see his ardour, see his spirit, see his magnanimity, see his willingness "to become all things to all men, that he might win some." It was the flame of that love which made him ready to be sacrificed for his fellow-Christians. It was the effect of that temper, and of those truths and virtues, which lead to God, not to be found in any other character but the Lord Jesus Christ. "What, therefore, we have received, and heard, and seen of Him, do." Wherever we see any pattern of virtue, let us imitate it. Let us bless God for examples; and even from the failings of others we may receive profit. That is, my brethren, the happy man, and the best man, who makes the swiftest advances, by virtue and holiness, to God and to eternity. Amen.

XII.

CHAP. iv., 10–23: But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

THE Apostle Paul, in the former part of this chapter, having enjoined some general duties for Christian practice, adverts, in the words now read, to some incidents of a more private nature, that had taken place between himself and the Church of Philippi. Their generosity in supplying his necessities and relieving him in his afflictions he considered as done to the honour of Christ, and as an expression of piety that would be taken "as an odour of a sweet smell, acceptable and well-pleasing to God." That whatever donation they conveyed to him, that *there* it did not ultimately terminate, agreeably to that Divine and condescending maxim of our Saviour, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." That God would consider these gifts as more honourable if done to his afflicted members than if done to himself and Christ, in their own person and presence; because the majesty of his character and the greatness of his power would extort obedience, so that nothing could be refused to his commands. They were, therefore, greater proofs of humility and benevolence when done to his afflicted brethren, as standing instead of God.

The apostle proceeds to consider the expression of their care for him, in the gift they had sent for the relief of his necessities by the hands of Epaphroditus. Verse 10th: "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." Implying that he viewed this as a token of the economy exercised by Jesus Christ, who controlled every providence; therefore, he "rejoices in the Lord greatly," that their care of him had increased. He did not mean to reproach them with any want of attention, but that the uncertainties of his situation, incident to travelling and imprisonments, had prevented them from doing that which, now they had the opportunity, they felt peculiar pleasure in sending to him.

Verses 11th and 12th: He adds, which highly deserves our attention, "Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." The apostle does not mean by this that all varieties of fortune equally moved and affected him; this would have been to raise him above human nature; but he means that he was not unhappy when in destitution, nor elated in abundance; that no poverty ever so far depressed him as to destroy his tranquillity, and he had a peace of mind which the greatest prosperity could not give. A full reliance on the mercy of the Divine hand, an assurance of eternal rewards, a dignified consciousness of the rectitude of his intentions and conduct, and a firm belief that all would end well.

"I am instructed every way, and in all things." Probably this means as into mysteries; in allusion to those mysteries of Ceres, celebrated in Greece, or into a high piece of learning and great attainment. And surely this is a very notable kind of learning to be able to say, with the apostle, "In whatsoever state I am, I have learned therewith to be content."

What is the frequent source of men's misery and unhappiness? What is it that leads rich men to wish for more? What is it that makes a poor man resolve to be rich at all events—but discontent? What is it, even when a man possesses every thing that he can wish, that makes his enjoyments pall upon his existence from mere satiety, where there is nothing better to engage his heart and powers, but discontent? What is it, in all cases, that makes men unhappy (insanity excepted), but discontent? Rapine, injustice, murder, avarice, ambition, all owe their origin to this. But the wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, which Paul professed, teaches all, in every state and condition, to be content.

Now, my brethren, if we would possess ourselves of this learning, of this wisdom, it must not be by any one violent effort, by a mere instantaneous resolution, because the passions are not

formed or moved by violent efforts of intellect; but we must observe and contemplate Divine Providence in all the events of life, and in every condition. We must retire from the world, and the circumstances of it; there you will see it at a proper distance. You must deliberately place your treasure in heaven; your hearts must be there. You must yield yourselves up to God, to be made happy in his own way, with the assurance "that all things," even all afflictions, if you love Him, shall work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. A mind thus exercised will naturally acquire this contentment, which no philosophy can produce or stoicism perpetuate.

A Christian, my brethren, is possessed of a treasure, an inward source of enjoyment, not entirely independent of the changes of life, but less dependant than others. It raises him superior to the fear of death, so that he can defy it in every form, saying, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" With an assurance of a refuge which God has granted him, there is nothing to alarm him in futurity, and nothing but what is supportable in present circumstances.

As for those who are continually lamenting their lot, and looking upon other persons with envy or jealousy, it is very evident that they have not attained this wisdom; they certainly have not taken *any degrees;* they are not initiated into the Christian profession, even if they have the first rudiments of piety. They have not that satisfaction with the conduct of Divine Providence, which the apostle so strongly represents as the best gift that God can bestow—as a beam of hope, brightening all the scenes and troubles of life—as the day star from on high, that will arise in our hearts to comfort and support us.

Verse 13th: "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." Here is the great secret and source of his power—Christ strengthening him. A realizing sense of the doctrines of the gospel thus impressed upon the heart, is that which is called "the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus." The apostle, disjoined from Him, would be quite another man—the whole text refers to an abiding in Christ. "As the branch cannot bring forth fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me," was the Saviour's own declaration. Abide in Him and he will abide in you, and his words will abide in you. In this connexion Paul was enabled to act this part; he has the firmest confidence with the greatest modesty. This spirit will keep us at an equal distance from boasting and dejection. Christ is "head over all things," for the good of his people. The strength of a Christian lies in his Head—it comes from God; whereas, stoical principles lead men to pride, to high-mindedness, to idolize and aggrandize themselves, to make a deity of man. A Christian has a deity within himself; it is God dwelling in him and he in God: hence he can do all things through Christ strengthening him.

Verse 14th: The apostle takes occasion from this to say, "Notwithstanding, ye did well to communicate with me in my afflictions." Observe, the apostle calls his imprisonment at Rome an affliction. It never was the design of Christianity to make men insensible. Afflictions are intended to purify and sanctify, to cleanse us from all pollutions of the flesh and spirit, and to correct our wanderings: "They are not joyous, but grievous, yet afterward they produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness." If a Christian were not strengthened and supported under his trials, the power and energy of religion would not be manifest to others.

The whole life of the Apostle Paul is a comment upon this part of the subject. We see such a series of changes and afflictions, strifes, persecutions, and imprisonments, that would have sunk any resolution not supported by Divine promises. What afflictions! In nakedness and hunger; in continual strifes and persecutions; in perils by land; in perils by sea (thrice he suffered shipwreck); in perils among false brethren. He could have no tranquillity but what was from within. While there was every thing outward to agitate him, he retired into his own heart, as into a sacred asylum, and there he found peace.

Verses 15th and 16th: "Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only." "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessity." That is, no church or city thought of relieving the necessities of Paul but Philippi, a city of great distinction.

In Thessalonica, we are informed, he laboured with his own hands, principally as an example to indolent persons and busybodies in other men's matters, and that he might not be chargeable to any. He departed from the authority of an apostle to become all things to all men, that he might win some; to warn the unruly and the indolent, to comfort the feeble-minded, and to support the weak.

Verse 17th: "Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." Here is a great instance of nobleness of mind. He considers what they had done for him as benefiting themselves. He did not desire a gift, but fruit to abound to their account. He calls our attention to fruit, "that we bring forth fruit." Whatever stops short of this, whatever does not produce a holy, benevolent conduct, is not Christianity. Our principles must be pure; the tree must be made good before the fruit can be good. Never satisfy yourselves, my brethren, that your principles are good, if you do not bring forth fruit—that course of conduct and those actions which shall glorify God. "By their fruits ye shall know them;" this is the most extensive rule of self-examination you can have.

Verse 18th: "But I have all, and abound; I am full, having re-

ceived of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God." You see from this, my brethren, how acts of beneficence or generosity are to be performed. If done from a real regard to the honour of God and a sincere feeling of benevolence towards man, even the common actions of life, if performed from these Christian principles, and animated by Christian motives, may turn to good account: "As a sweet-smelling savour, acceptable and well-pleasing to God." When, therefore, any of you are disposed to benevolent or humane actions, if they spring from right motives, they are acceptable to God.

Verse 19th: The apostle adds, by way of encouragement, "But my God shall supply all your need." He frequently insists on their great generosity and their poverty. The Philippians were for the most part poor, but exceedingly generous. When he is writing to some of his converts, he makes use of this motive, "Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather working with his hand the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." The apostle not only tells them to support themselves, but to become benefactors. This is incumbent upon all, except such as live by alms. Mankind is divided into two classes—benefactors and recipients; and nothing so much enlarges and softens the heart as the consideration of being partakers in the treasures of the gospel, "of like precious faith," "and heirs of the same inheritance." This the apostle often insists upon as a motive to stimulate the Philippians.

Verse 20th: "Now unto God, and our Father, be glory forever and ever, Amen." How pleasing, my brethren, to adopt this language from a grateful and confiding heart! What a dignity is conferred upon the Christian, who can think of the glory, the perfections, and the attributes of God, and call him Father! For, through Jesus Christ taking our nature, we become brethren of the same family. He is gone into the presence of his Father as the first-born among many brethren. He said, "Lo, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Let us aim at this adoption into the family of God. Let us think of God as our father. What affection it implies! What confidence is there in this calm trust in the Divine mercy! How happy is that person who can go to God, even to God, and say, My Father! Short of this, our profession of piety is all darkness. Never rest contented in your Christian profession without this; and with this spirit, "we become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." The apostle closes the epistle with a salutation, in which every saint is included. Every person was dear to him as a believer in the Son of God.

Verses 21st and 22d: "Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cesar's household." We learn from this that even in Nero's family there were some Christians;

a man who was almost a prodigy of wickedness and cruelty. They were probably struck with the majesty and greatness of God, and with such examples of holy fortitude and steadfastness manifested by the apostles and others. They became disciples, they were separated from the world, and were sanctified by Jesus Christ. This administers encouragement to those who are placed in families where prayer is banished, and perhaps ridiculed, for there were believers even in Nero's family. Let such persons keep alive our holy religion in the midst of the greatest trials and discouragements, and God grant that this may be the experience of us all. Amen.

LETTERS.

LETTERS.

TO MR. H., ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE.

My dear Friend,

I cannot express the emotions of soul which I felt on receiving from your valuable son an account of the death of his dear mamma. I often realize in my mind, and think I see you in various postures, and with indications of heartfelt sorrow and pungent perplexity. Oh! the piercing pangs of grief attending such a separation! They cannot be explained nor *pictured* but in idea. I have felt, I daily feel, for you and your dear children. Your and their loss is great indeed. More —But stop, my friend: the sluices of sorrow ought not to be kept open, but the torrent of grief abated, lest it swell beyond the bounds of Christian moderation, and overwhelm the soul. How favourable to mourners is the blessed gospel! Gaze not, therefore, on the dark side of the cloud. The black and sable dispensation is tinged with radiant beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which portend a glorious coming day. Could you hear the dear departed spirit, her language would be, "Refrain from tears; I am well: weep not for me."

Consider, my dear friend: He who gave her, reserved a superior right to her: this she, through grace, sweetly acquiesced in: and though she gave herself to *you* for a time, yea, till time with her should be no more, she gave herself to the Lord "in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten." The Lord, her first, her *best* husband, was not willing to bear her absence any longer, and therefore sent his chariot to convey her home, saying, "Arise, my fair one, and come away."

My friend, you will likewise consider that you and *she* are not far separated; for although all communication be now broken off, you are yet, and will forever continue, in the same house, even the house of mercy; that divine, capacious, and beautiful structure which, Jehovah hath said, "Shall be built up forever." In that house are many mansions. We are in the lower apartments, while she is admitted to the large upper rooms, where Jesus keeps the feast with his disciples; and by-and-by I hope the Lord will give us a gracious token, and say, "Come up hither."

You know, sir, it is an evil time: a gloomy prospect attends the land: her righteous soul may in mercy be taken from the evil to come. However, it is in the Lord's hands, who says, "Be still, and know that I am God." Difficulties and increasing cares, it is true, devolve upon you; but know that the Lord is all-sufficient. It makes not *much* difference whether burdens be essened or increased, if strength be but in

exact proportion; and He who cannot lie hath said, "My strength shall be perfected in thy weakness; and as thy day is, so shall thy strength be." Creatures are like candles: very useful, and always most prized, when the sun is absent; but if he arise, we can do without them. May the Lord arise and shine, and his glory light upon you and yours! As death does not separate from the Lord, neither does it divide the saints from one another. Your spirit and hers daily meet at the same *throne:* she to *praise*, and you to *pray;* therefore, in that sense, though absent in the body, you are present in the spirit; and after a while you will meet in person, to part no more; for "them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." In the mean time, we are called to walk by faith, and not by sight; and He, in whom we may safely confide, hath declared, "All things work together for good." It was once a reconciling thought to me in great trouble, that afflictions are compared in Scripture to workmen; all employed and busy in the Christian's behalf. They work for you: it might have been against you, as is frequently feared. They work together, not separately, but in happy harmony. I then thought, the more the better, if God direct and point out their employment; for the end to be accomplished is "a far more exceeding, eternal weight of glory." As persons take pleasure in reviewing the industrious workman, so the Christian, with Paul, may rejoice, not only in the Lord, but in his tribulation also. "I take pleasure in mine infirmities also." If God send a great affliction, thought I, we may then view it as a fresh workman engaged in our favour; and not only so, but look upon it as one who, in consequence of singular strength, will despatch business, though of a heavy nature, at a great pace. Thus those for whom they are employed will grow rich at last. Among others, "let patience have her perfect work." She is a pensive, but a precious grace. Have, likewise, labour abundant in the Lord. Desire goes in search after celestial productions; Hope stands on tiptoe to view them; Faith goes to receive them, and brings them home. Thus the just shall live by his faith; for what Faith brings, Love cordially receives, and Volition bids it welcome. Joy sings, and makes sweet melody; Peace possesses; Rest receives; and Fear ceases to quake, and Jealousy to tremble. How well is it for the soul when tribulation worketh for her, and when every grace is active in her! Angels encamp about her, and God rejoiceth over her to do her good. I would not be tedious; excuse my prolixity.

I remain your affectionate and sympathizing friend, and, I hope, brother in the kingdom and patience of Christ Jesus,

ROBERT HALL.

II.

TO A CLERGYMAN OF CAMBRIDGE.*

Cambridge, Aug. 7, 1795.

Rev. Sir—Altercation is at all times unpleasant, especially when occasions of disagreement arise between ministers of the gospel of peace who reside in the same place. On this account, no motive less powerful than self-defence and the desire of vindicating aspersed innocence could compel me to address you, in this public manner, on the very extraordinary sermon you delivered last Sunday afternoon at your parish church. Not having had the satisfaction of hearing you, I am obliged to depend for my information of its contents upon report; and I hope, if I am so unfortunate as to mistake or misrepresent your sentiments, you will be so kind as to set me right.

Your text, I understand, was Matt., vii., 15–20, "Beware of false-prophets," &c. Your sermon, I find, was directed to a display of the arts of religious seduction, with a view to prepare and fortify your hearers against the designs of bad men, who, under the cloak of religion, might endeavour to corrupt their innocence and pervert their simplicity. You levelled these precautions particularly against the Dissenters; complained of the artful methods they took to draw off men from the Church; and that the Baptists, in particular, would never be satisfied till they got your people under the water. You read, you remember, the following extract from Matthew Henry's comment on the words of your text, as applicable to the false prophets you had in view, observing it would have the greater weight with some, as coming from a Dissenter: "If the doctrine be of God, it will tend to promote serious piety, humility, charity, holiness, and love, with other Christian graces; but if, on the contrary, the doctrines these prophets preach have a manifest tendency to make people proud, worldly, and contentious, to make them loose and careless in their conversation, unjust, or uncharitable, factious, or disturbers of the public peace; if it indulge carnal liberty, and take people off from governing themselves and their families by the strict rules of the narrow way, we may conclude that this persuasion cometh not of Him who calleth them." I have a right, sir, to demand who these ministers are whose preaching tends to make their hearers proud and contentious, factious, or disturbers of the public peace? You cannot mean to guard your parishioners against preachers at a distance: precaution is useless where there is no danger. You unquestionably had in view some minister or ministers upon

* This letter is the one referred to by Dr. Gregory, in the preface to vol. iii., p. 5, as the only article he had omitted in his volumes which Mr. Hall had previously published. I am sorry in this instance to differ from the Dr., and think it important to print it. The clergyman to whom it was addressed was in early life exceedingly friendly with his dissenting brethren, but incurring, in this manner, the displeasure of his superiors, he became a bigoted and violent opponent to all who ventured to worship within unconsecrated walls. Unhappily, this spirit in England is greatly on the increase, and the letter has been recently republished there. I have thought it important to present it to the American public, as a standing argument against a system which cherishes the spirit that is here censured.—B.

the spot. Permit me to ask who they are; and upon what authority you presume to charge their doctrine with being inimical to piety, and subversive of order and government? Have you ever yourself heard them utter any such doctrine? or, if you collect your report from hearsay, on whose report do you rely? You are, unquestionably, not so little instructed in the principles of morality as to be ignorant that calumny is a vice, and that—under every character by which you can be respected, as a minister, as a Christian, and as a man of honour—you are called upon either to establish the truth of your positions, or confess their falsehood.

You have thought fit to caution your people against being seduced from their attachment to the Church by the supposed insinuations or artifice of the Dissenters. What insinuations and what artifice have we ever practised? Our dissent from the Established Church is publicly tolerated by the laws, and its reasons are open to the whole world. Name, if you can, a single instance in which the Dissenters at Cambridge have attempted to make proselytes by any private and clandestine methods, by any other means than the open avowal of their sentiments. I believe you will not be disposed to make the same demand on your part; or, if you should, I am prepared to give you a farther answer than you wish.

As you passed from a general attack upon Dissenters to specify the Baptists in particular, and to put your hearers on their guard against their arts of proselytism, I call upon you, in the character of a Baptist, to explain your insinuations. Produce, if you would not stand convicted as a public calumniator, one specimen of that unfair and ungenerous method of making converts which you have attributed to us. Our sentiments upon the baptismal rite exempt us from any temptations to lay undue stress upon it; we consider it merely as the symbol of a Christian profession, while you profess to believe it regenerates the partaker, and makes him a child of God. It would be cruel and inhuman in you not to enforce with eagerness the observation of a rite which can confer such exalted happiness at so cheap a rate. You ought to remember, too, that our mode of administering baptism by immersion is conformable to the laws of your own church, which appoint the candidate to be dipped, except in cases of weakness and disease.

The prominent feature in the description of those false prophets whom you undertake to expose was, that they preached a doctrine which had a manifest tendency to make the people factious, or disturbers of the public peace. Now, if it should appear that the dissenting ministers in this town do not touch upon politics in their religious services in any shape, their doctrine cannot be factious, or have any tendency to make men disturbers of the public peace. For myself, all who have ever heard me are witnesses that I never introduced a political topic into the pulpit on any occasion; nor have I any doubt the other dissenting ministers in this town can make the same declaration with equal sincerity. But, had our conduct been ever so remote from this moderation and reserve, modesty should unquestionably have re-

strained *you* from becoming your own accuser; when it is well known you are the chief, perhaps the only, political teacher in the place; and that you often entertain your hearers with more politics in one sermon than most dissenting ministers have done during their whole lives. The doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, which, in better times, [Sacheverell] was disgraced for preaching, are familiar in your mouth; the transient successes of the late war were, in my hearing, the subject of your triumphant boast; the exiled clergy of France you acknowledged to be brethren; and, to soften the harsh features of popery, you compared the difference of sentiment between its adherents and yourself to that which existed between the Gentile Church and the Jewish Church at Jerusalem. On the same occasion, you assured us, with infinite exultation, and with a degree of foresight which shows that if we were false prophets, you are not a true one, you anticipated the speedy return of the emigrant clergy. In admirable consistency with your character as a Protestant minister, you dwell with rapture on the prospect of seeing the walls of mystic Babylon rebuilt, and the ancient Church of Rome restored with fresh splendour. It is not politics, then, it is evident, to which you entertain an aversion: pardon me, sir, if, when I hear of your ascetic pretensions to political indifference, I suspect a little disingenuity at the bottom. While you reprobate political discussions, you embrace every opportunity of inflaming political passions; and, that you may the more securely guide the opinions of your admirers, you are anxious to keep them in the dark. The fervour of religious and ministerial attachment with you go hand in hand; and any marked dislike to the measures of government is considered as a mark of religious decline, if not of a total reprobation. Did you not lately industriously circulate an inflammatory prayer for success in the present war? Tell me how you could take a more active part in politics even if you were a hired tool of the ministry? Since, then, instead of being a calm, indifferent spectator, you are thus decided in your own political views and conduct, why have not the Dissenters an *equal right* to form an opinion? May not their attachment to peace and reform be as innocent as yours to war and corruption? How long is it since the support of the most profligate administration that ever plagued any country, an administration which has filled England with disease and Europe with blood, and which, in addition to its other delinquencies, is filling up the measure of its iniquities by nearly reducing us to famine, has become the distinguishing criterion of true piety?

Permit me, before I close this address, to admonish you to be upon your guard against a malignant, persecuting spirit, of which you have exhibited numerous indications for some *years* past. While you explain the general truths of Christianity, and inculcate its general duties, you will ensure the esteem of good men of all denominations, and find ample scope for the exertion of your ministerial talents. In addition to this, you have a right, unquestionably, to defend the doctrines and discipline of your particular church against the objections of Dissenters, provided you do it by entering into the true merits of the

question, without malignant insinuations, calculated to blacken the character of your opponents. Your ignorance of the controversy between the Establishment and Dissenters must be extreme, if you suppose general invectives against the disloyalty or irreligion of Dissenters can have any tendency to bring it to an issue. Whether we have lost the purity of our religion or not, can be known only to that Being who searches the heart; but your violation of the evangelical precepts of charity and candour makes it evident you have not found it.

You will, probably, be ready to inquire why I have not addressed you in private upon this subject, rather than through this public vehicle; especially since I had yesterday so fair an opportunity, by being accidentally thrown into your company. My reasons for preferring this mode relate partly to you and partly to myself: on the one hand, the impressions made to the disadvantage of any body of men by a public accusation can only be effaced by a public reply; on the contrary, if I have misrepresented your meaning, you have a fair opportunity of publicly clearing yourself of the suspicions of calumny.

I have only to add, if the serious perusal of this letter tend in any degree to correct the virulence of your temper, or restrain the excesses of party zeal, your character will rise in the esteem of an enlightened public, and you will have abundant reason to rejoice, though fewer bigots should applaud, and fewer fools should admire.

I am, reverend sir, your humble servant,

ROBERT HALL.

III.

TO MR. JAMES.

[With what sentiments of humility and devotion Mr. Hall succeeded to Broadmead, the station of his departed friend, the venerable Dr. Ryland, may be seen in the following extract from a letter to his worthy brother-in-law, Mr. Isaac James, dated Leicester, January 2, 1826.—ED.]

I SHALL write again upon this subject as soon as I am able to say any thing definite and decisive. I feel, my dear brother, an awful sense of the importance of the step I have taken, and of the weighty responsibility with which it is fraught. When I consider the eminent character of that man of God whom I am to succeed, no words can express the sense of deficiency I feel. I am so far from aspiring to a comparison, that I am seriously apprehensive my character and conduct will exhibit a melancholy contrast with his. Pray for me, my dear brother, frequently and fervently, that my goings may be upheld, that I may make full proof of my ministry, that I may be instant in season and out of season, and so take heed to myself and to my flock, that I may both save myself and them that hear me. How awful will it be, if the works of God should languish, and the souls of never-dying creatures perish, through my neglect! My greatest consolation springs from my consciousness that, as I did not seek the situation, so in all the preliminary steps I have most earnestly implored the Divine direction; committing my way unto the Lord with as much submission and simplicity as I could command.

GLEANINGS.

GLEANINGS.*

I.

PRAYER.

There is a tranquillity and fortitude which prayer inspires amid the troubles of life. When a good man has opened all the secrets of his soul to God, he begins to taste the hidden manna. It is like the fragrance of those flowers that perfume the air. When he went into the presence of God, perhaps with injured feelings, malignant or oppressed, he there drops his burden—all becomes calm and serene; and with his passions more pure, his benevolence more ardent, he returns into the world. This duty of private prayer will prepare you, beyond every other, for death. We must all soon die. How is it that men, when they come to die, begin to pray—even those who have never come to the house of God? but would they not pray better, think you, if they had been accustomed to it? Which is most likely to be accepted—that man that is pushed into the presence of the Supreme Being by the force of destiny, or that man who has sought him by prayer? The dying man, who has been delighted with the thought of being with God—that event which destroys every other hope, is but the commencement of his—*As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.* Come, then, let us bow down and kneel before the Lord our Maker. Whatever your condition be, turn to the Lord, that your prosperity may be holy, and your afflictions sanctified. Young persons, you are just embarked in a tempestuous ocean; you soon will be involved in storms where many wise men, many noble, have been sunk; let prayer be your polar star—what can guide and protect you but this?

Seek, my brethren, repose by prayer. If your mind be overwhelmed with trouble and anxiety, go into the presence of God, spread your case before Him; though He knows the desires of your hearts, yet He has declared He will *be sought after*. Go, therefore, into the presence of that God, who will at once tranquillize your heart, give you what you wish, or make you more happy without it, and who will be your everlasting consolation if you trust in Him, breathing peace into your soul, and commanding tranquillity in the midst of the greatest storms. How much are they to be pitied who never pray! the world is to them all gloom, for there they see none of the kindness and protection of our heavenly Father. We do not wonder that the sorrow of the world worketh death, with the distresses that human nature is exposed to.

Prayer is the sovereign remedy; use it, therefore. Try this medi-

* Chiefly from the memoranda of John Greene, Esq.

cine. In every season of affliction, whatever you feel of present distress, or fear of future calamity, go to God, before whom none ever bowed in vain, and He will *bow the heavens and come down*, and fill your souls with *peace and consolation;* with that peace of God *which passeth all understanding*, with a sense of his favour, of reconciliation with Him, and an interest in his everlasting love. This preserves the heart of man in the greatest troubles, in the midst of the greatest cares, and from the incursion of ten thousand enemies. If your hearts and minds lie open to corrosion and care, what signifies how great or how famous you are? If you could silence all the world, yet, with such a clamour in a man's own heart, a civil war within, his passions in a state of confusion, what would it avail? And this is always the case with the wicked; *they are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest;* but that *peace of God which passeth all understanding* will keep and preserve in the soul a region of light in the midst of Egyptian darkness; and were discord to ravage the earth, *there* it could not reach. Let us, then, my brethren, seek after this peace of God by prayer and supplication. Seek relief from that quarter. Whatever uneasiness of mind you feel, go into the presence of your God, bow your knees before Him, there deprecate your case, then seek forgiveness through Christ as a Mediator; open to Him all your sorrows; He is the only being who will always attend to you. Friends, in many cases, can only shed tears, and increase your sorrows by mingling them with your own; but He can give you light in the midst of darkness, He can give you eternal happiness. Let us, then, make all our requests known to Him.

II.

NEAR VIEWS OF GOD.

Humility and repentance are the result of large acquaintance with God. Job said, *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.* It expresses two kinds of knowledge—the one speculative, the other practical. He had formerly a distant and vague acquaintance of God, without contemplating Him by that faith *which seeth him who is invisible.* He now had an intimate, a deep and practical sense of God, very different from the mere vague conceptions he had when he only heard of Him; that knowledge which is practical, deep, intimate, and profound. The two effects were humility and repentance. Humility is produced by the sight of his greatness, repentance by a knowledge of his purity. It is the union of these that form the idea of God.

III.

THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

Life is not to be marked by its felicities, but by its duties. Preserve order in the arrangement of time; distribute it into parts: for the want of this method many persons never succeed in the most virtuous employments; many cares rush upon them, and, having no plan, all will be distraction and hurry. Never depart from your plan because of slight inconveniences. It includes in it the making a right use of the leisure and interstices of life. Some seasons will occur of this kind; a right use of these form the character; for men are more formed and moulded by the choice of their amusements than by the force and pressure of business. Let your leisure be often employed in reading the Scriptures, in meditation, and in prayer. Let the Bible be always at hand; frequently take a cordial of comfort from it. Read religious books; learn to make a right use of your sacred time, to weed the soul from sin, and to dress it for immortality: these will have a decisive influence upon the happiness or misery of eternity. Consider how short and transitory time is; all the images that can express frailty have been employed and heaped upon life. One writer compares it to leaves, another to a shadow and a dream. The Apostle James compares it to a vapour, which the sun exhales, and then it disappears; and compared with the protracted life of the patriarchs, it sinks into a point; for that which in a time will be nothing, is nothing. It is a narrow isthmus dividing two oceans; an eternity past and to come. A happy or miserable eternity depends upon a right improvement of your time. Since we cannot count upon time, let us redeem it; your only time is that which is present. Satan steals away our time by stealing the present. In the view of God, we are contemporaries with him. The difference of time influences our imagination, but makes no alteration with God. Attend to the sentiments and feelings of dying men upon the value of life: they are on the confines of two worlds; they are passing through one, and they have a prospect of another. One month! one day more! They would esteem days above diamonds.

When Grotius was dying, he was asked what he would recommend to others. He replied, "Be serious, be serious." But two words—all his vast knowledge induced him to express it in two words! There are many without half his learning who would think their understandings insulted by such a request. Do not say, To-morrow I will reform—to-morrow I will subdue my passions. To-morrow may never come!

IV.

REMEDIES AGAINST THE FEARS OF DEATH.

The natural fear of death is a source of terror to the human mind. Christianity suggests several ways to conquer this:

1. A strict sobriety in the pursuits of life.

Let your moderation be known to all men. The more we live above sense, the more we are prepared for that world where nothing that is not spiritual can enter.

2. Another guard against the fear of death is to accustom ourselves to draw our enjoyments from those scenes which it cannot disturb.

The twofold nature of man connects him with two kinds of objects; those that are present and visible, and those that are invisible and immortal: the more he draws his happiness from the last source, the more it will prepare him for the last conflict. He who seeks his pleasures in those things which relate to his intellect, not for distinction's sake, but for the increase of his virtue and the improvement of his mind, has entered on a career which will be extended through eternity. If you seek your happiness in the calm of your passions and the approbation of your heart, you will rise superior to the fear of death.

3. An eminent degree of the love of God is another specific for the fear of death.

Perfect love casteth out fear, but especially the fear of death. Is it not a state of universal change? a state and condition where we have no previous acquaintance, where all things will be new? But God, in the amplitude of his love, will shed a domestic acquaintance over those regions. Jesus Christ said, *In my Father's house are many dwelling-places; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you.* We shall then feel warm with the love of God, who is the God of that world. Besides, love naturally wishes to dwell with its object; and the principal difference that death makes is a union with God. He will show the good man the path of life; then all that conceals God will be removed, and all that shuts out the more immediate beams of the Divine presence and vision; for then shall *I see as I am seen, and know even also as I am known.*

Death places a good man with Him who will be all in all. Eternity will be to you, my brethren, but as your Father's house. Jesus Christ said, *I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*

4. By rendering our imagination familiar with it; this is an exercise which good men have accustomed themselves to.

It is thus men train themselves for real battle. Look forward to all the circumstances of our arrival at the last hour, the sickness and the sorrow that surrounds our bed: the more we think of death, by certain desires and tendencies as to futurity, the less terrible it will appear. A sober joy will spring up, that will detect pleasure even in the grim

aspect of death, so as to enable us to say, with the apostle, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* It will be the image of immortality, and only as a dark avenue into which we must enter into the eternal world. This will mix with the shades of the sepulchre a light that will light it up. Do not take a cowardly refuge in vanity and dissipation.

5. Some remedies that may be proposed, by which death may be considered as a relief to man.

How many pains and miseries, greater than death, have befallen some of you. Death is but an instant of being. Consider how many have supported the fear of death without Christianity. There is not a passion but what has overcome it. The passion of love, of fame, and ambition. Despair has dug for it as for hidden treasures; but religious joy has not only surmounted, but triumphed over it. Let us remember how many persons would rather have died than have met certain calamities. Cressius was not the only man that lamented that he had lived too long. How happy for Eli, for example, would it have been, if he had died before the judgments of God fell upon his children. How happy would death have been to Solomon, before he fell into idolatry. *Who knoweth what is good for man all the days of his life? for the good are taken away from the evil that is to come.* God considers death as a deliverance; he takes his children aside, and leads them into the sanctuary of the grave. Let us then, my brethren, seek an interest in the Divine favour, and in the promises of the gospel. We should consider the death of a Christian rather an enviable object than a pitiable one. When the apostles heard of the death of Lazarus, they said, *Lord, let us go and do likewise.*

V.

THE APOSTOLIC WRITERS.

The doctrines of religion might have been taught in a different form, if the Scriptures had been calculated to give us mere speculative knowledge; but they exhibit the temper of the heart. We see the writers of them in bonds and afflictions, in triumphs and miscarriages. These epistles represent them under every variety of form and circumstance, in order that we may learn and know what is that *one spirit* which all the disciples breathed. It is of very little purpose to have an acquaintance with the doctrines, unless we have the spirit which the apostles breathe in all these epistles, and which has formed and sanctified the hearts of his chosen in every age.

Do not, my brethren, read them only to know what it is they teach, but consider them with a view to the improvement and renovation of the heart, producing that sincerity, that devotedness to Christ, that heavenly-mindedness, which they everywhere inculcate; and let these penetrate your hearts, and make you ashamed of yourselves, that you should fall so far short of the spirit of disciples; for, unless we possess

this spirit in some degree, we cannot be his disciples. If you compare these writings with the celebrated heathen authors in sublimity of style, in purity, in elegance, and in delicacy of expression; look at them with seriousness, and how low and little do their characters appear, although these heathen writers came into alliance with every thing that is great and splendid in this world; but the apostles came into contact with God; they touched the Eternal; they breathed into his temper, *and out of that fulness received grace for grace.* Let us, my brethren, seek this renovation of mind; *let us not be slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises.* Let us breathe after their spirit and their enjoyments, and very shortly the days of our mourning will be ended, and we shall be with them and with the Lord.

VI.

CHRISTIAN DIGNITY.

"*Whatsoever things are honest.*"

Here the word undoubtedly signifies venerable. It is a part of dignified manner of behaviour, as the word *honestum* signifies, from which it is taken. It stands opposed to a fantastic, to a light and frothy behaviour, to foolish jesting and buffoonery, to the character of a scoffer, and to the character of a wit. Indeed, it is impossible that wit, or the faculty of making people laugh, should be suitable to the dignity of a Christian, an heir of eternal life; it is impossible that this can associate or comport with a grave, a serious, and manly deportment, which is perfectly inconsistent with trifling and jesting. There is nothing will produce this dignified character so much as the consideration of the design of human life, the dignity of the Christian calling, and the end of our being. Mirth, though useful at times to the spirits, yet if it be made the business of life, "*we are dead while we live.*"

VII.

PARENTAL DISCIPLINE.

Mr. Hall frequently regretted the change that had taken place within the last forty years in the restraints and bonds of parental authority; that young persons were not under the same sort of discipline and control as formerly; that if our forefathers, the Puritans, were too rigid, their descendants are too lax. He had high ideas of the authority of parents, which he considered amounted to patriarchal. The following is a specimen: He observed, "God sent a message by the child Samuel to Eli. The purport of it was the destruction of his sons, and the taking away of the ark; with these all the dignity of the house

of Eli was extinguished. The affliction was very complicated. Poverty was inflicted upon his children, and the two which were chief in transgression fell in one day. Such was the punishment, *that every one that was left in his house crouched for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread.* And what was Eli's offence? That he did not exercise that power and authority for restraining the vices of his children which, as a parent, he possessed. *His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* This was his crime. Children and servants are not to be persuaded merely, but commanded; as God said of Abraham, *I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord.* Parents are required to exercise that authority which, by God, by nature, and by religion, is put into their power, for the advancement of their children and servants in piety, and in every heavenly work. If setting an example, then, merely, will not exempt them from punishment, how dreadful will it be for those parents who set the example of their own vices! Young persons should take warning from this. The sons of Eli were even the children of Abraham, and the children of the priesthood; and what was their crime? *They made themselves vile*, they despised the piety of their parent, they led the fashion, they indulged in sensuality. Impiety makes a man vile. The decree is gone forth, and all the maxims and customs of the world cannot alter it. *Them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.*

VIII.

THE DANGER OF EVIL COMPANIONS.

Society is the atmosphere of souls, and we necessarily imbibe something which is either infectious or salubrious. The society of virtuous persons is enjoyed beyond their company, while vice carries a sting into solitude. The society, or the company you keep, is both the indication of your character and the former of it. In company, when the pores of the mind are opened, there requires more guard than usual, because the mind is then passive. Either vicious company will please you, or it will not; if it does not please you, the end of going will be defeated. You will feel your reverence for the dictates of conscience wear off, and that name, at which angels bow and devils tremble, you will hear contemned and abused. The Bible will supply materials for unmeaning jests or impious buffoonery: the consequence of this will be, a practical deviation into vice; the principles will become sapped, and the fences of conscience broken down; and, when debauchery has corrupted the character, a total inversion will take place, as the apostle speaks, *they glory in their shame.*

IX.

CHRISTIAN EXAMPLE.

The Ephesian Christians were to walk as children of God. And if the sons of God were indeed to descend to this earth, what majesty, what dignity, what elevation, what purity, what sweetness should we behold! You, as Christians, are exhorted to that spirit; you are adopted into that family, you have that same spirit within you. *Walk, therefore, as the sons of God, holding forth the word of life, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.* This is in allusion to a lamp that is large and splendid; for so is the word of God exhibited in the conduct of true Christians, and diffused into our spirit and temper.

Christians do not shine by any light of their own, but it is a borrowed light; it is by that spirit and temper which is formed by the word of God. This makes them shine as sons of God.

In consequence of this, they show to men the way of salvation; they point the way to happiness; they show the vanity of their pursuits; and, in the spirit of the patriarchs, *they condemn the world*, and thus become the *heirs of righteousness through faith.* You see, my brethren, how essential it is that Christianity should penetrate your hearts. It is not merely calling yourselves Christians, either as Churchmen or Dissenters, which makes you shine as lights in the world; for these, in comparison, are contemptible distinctions. But it teaches us such an estimate of all human good, such moderation and meekness, as shall fit us for the *inheritance of the saints in light;* this is effected by the word of God sanctifying us throughout. Our Saviour prays, *Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth. I have consecrated them to be mine, even as Thou hast sanctified Me.*

Our example, my brethren, cannot be indifferent; it will either be a *savour of life unto life, or of death unto death;* it will either bring great reproach or honour on the gospel. *Let your light then so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify our heavenly Father.*

X.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE THOUGHTS.

Christian watchfulness includes in it a care of the thoughts; herein is the difference between a bad man and a good man, not as to the character of the thoughts themselves that occur to the mind, for the same may arise in the minds of both, but in the selection, the complacency, and the esteem given, to such as are

detained and solicited. If the thoughts of men are ambitious, their characters are ambitious; if the thoughts of men are avaricious, their characters will be avaricious. The heart is determined by the thoughts; as is their thoughts, so is their character; the thoughts form the passions, the passions form the actions, the actions form the man. The thoughts are marked with an infinity of views and complexions, but it depends upon ourselves what thoughts we choose. The government of the thoughts is the government of the inward regions. A prince may possess the largest dominions and yet be the victim of his thoughts.

XI.

SUPREME LOVE TO GOD.

We may remark the influence these sentiments have in supporting the mind under the decays of nature and sickness. There is then frequently a diminution of strength and energy; a general lassitude spreads over the whole frame; the mind is employed in counting the lingering minutes, and chiding the slow pace of time; *once to die, and after death the judgment.* Revelation rivets these sentiments upon the mind; all these clouds are scattered when the sentiment of the Psalmist can be adopted; it will calm the mind; it will have a twofold influence: it reconciles the man to leave this world, and brightens the prospect of futurity. We may remark farther on this sublime topic, the supreme love of God—*Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee,* is adapted to every season of life. To youth, on account of your forwardness to presume; your excess and impetuosity it will restrain; it will give a right direction to all your pursuits; it will guard your bodies from shameful vices and diseases, and preserve your mind from remorse. The love of God takes away the relish of sin; your afflictions will work together for good: thus your youth will be lively, holy, and innocent; and at last you will be conducted to the right hand of God

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XII.

INFIDELITY.

Let us seriously consider where else we can find any balm for the wounded and distressed conscience; where can we find peace but in Jesus Christ? what other way hath been opened to the Father? *No man cometh to the Father but by Me.* Do you wish to live beyond the grave? cleave to Christianity. Would you go to those infidel philosophers who have desecrated heaven

to make way for their impious speculations? There is nothing in their nomenclature, nothing in their jargon, that can express eternal life; they have read, or heard of a millennium, and they have fancied a general diffusion of knowledge, science, and virtue, a thousand years hence; they have heard of *the spirits of just men made perfect*, and they have dreamed of the perfectibility of man in the present world. *Will ye also go away*, who have made some sacrifices for religion? What joy can you substitute instead of the gospel? Have they obtained any greater elevation in knowledge and virtue? Are they better fathers? better husbands? better members of society? *Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*

XIII.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

I SHALL take occasion to speak of the dignity of Jesus Christ, and specify some of those arguments to fortify the mind in favour of the divinity of Jesus Christ. The arguments may be reduced to three classes.

I. The representations in Scripture of his personal intrinsic dignity.

The Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that is made. And, in order to put it beyond a doubt, the apostle adds, *The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.* Again, Isaiah relates, in his 6th chapter, that *he saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, high, and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.* This was fulfilled in the ministry of our Lord; for the evangelist says, *These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory and spake of Him.* The glory that he saw, therefore, was the glory of Jesus Christ. Also, in the 40th chapter of Isaiah, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord* (or the Jehovah, as it should be), *make straight in the desert a highway for our God.* To prepare the way for God, therefore, was to prepare the way of Jesus Christ. Agreeably to this is the conjugal relation of God with the children of Israel: *Thy maker is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name.* Jesus Christ was the bridegroom of the Church; for it is said, *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom.* Now, unless the word of God is designed to mislead and perplex, Jesus Christ is certainly the husband of the Church. Again, it is written, *Moses was faithful as a servant; but Jesus Christ, as a son over his own house: and though He was a son, yet learned He obedience, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Let all the angels of God worship Him.* But he was not one of them, for *to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit thou on My right hand until I make thine enemies my footstool?*

There are but three orders of intelligent beings that we meet with in Scripture: God, angels, and men. What place, then, can be assigned to him? The privileges are great which are conferred upon us, even that of eternal life. The Apostle Paul reasons thus, from the greater to the less: *If God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!* God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that he chose to give eternal life in connexion with such a greater blessing; therefore, the benignity that bestowed the one will bestow the other.

II. The works and offices which are ascribed to Jesus Christ.

1. The work of creation. *For by him all things are created, by him, and for him, in heaven and in earth.* It is useless to say this means the "Christian dispensation" only, for the Christian dispensation is not *all things in heaven and in earth.* Surely, then, that power which stretches over the world must be Divine. Supposing Jesus Christ was only superior to the angels, then the worlds were made by an inferior being; and this is contrary to every principle of natural, as well as revealed, religion. The Apostle Paul says, *For the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*

2. Jesus Christ is represented as an all-sufficient and effectual Saviour, not as *revealing* only, but actually *bestowing* the blessing. The prophets, my brethren, never challenged others to put confidence in them; but Jesus Christ is placed in Scripture as the object of trust: *I know in whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* Agreeably to this, the protomartyr Stephen said, *Lord Jesus, into thy hand I commit my spirit.*

3. The universal judgment is put into the hand of Jesus Christ. There is no kind of glory, and honour, and dominion, that can be put into the hand of God but what is placed in his; and amid the convulsions of a devouring world, He has described himself as saying, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom; and to the wicked, Depart, ye cursed.* To judge any individual must employ a knowledge of his heart. Is Jesus Christ destitute of this prerogative? No; for he says, *That all the churches may know that I am he that searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men, and will give unto every man according to his works.* Observe, not only that he *will* search the heart, but *I do* search the heart. To suppose that it is only an occasional assumption of power, is to suppose a child in this assembly to be capable of exercising the abilities of Sir Isaac Newton.

III. The worship that was actually paid to Jesus Christ.

To all that call upon the name of Christ: Stephen died *calling upon Christ.* Now, to call upon the name of God in the Old as well as New Testament, is used to express worship or adoration. I know no other way of charging the Romish Church with

idolatry, but because they call upon the names of persons departed. In the Revelation a magnificent description is given by the Apostle John, when Jesus Christ said, *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death.* And though the Apostle John had lain in his bosom, *he fell at his feet as dead.* The idea of divinity would naturally attach itself to his mind, in Rev., v., 12: *Saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the* LAMB *forever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth forever and ever.* Who can this be that the angels are represented as terminating the silence of heaven by breaking forth in his praises? If the worship of Jesus Christ is, then, idolatry (as our opponents charge us with), we may rest perfectly satisfied, for we see that it has infected heaven itself. Pliny, a heathen historian, tells us, "that Christians met and worshipped Jesus Christ as God." This has been the prevailing opinion of the first ages, and, consequently, the idolatry (as it is called) of Jesus Christ has been the most extensive of all idolatries. Is it likely, my brethren, that he should come into the world to destroy all other idolatries to erect himself in their room? He that was *the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;* either he would have refused the worship, or have guarded his followers against it. Let it be remembered, that the persons who have denied the divinity of Jesus Christ have distinguished themselves by impugning the authority of inspiration, lest, through these conflicting elements, a fire should spring that would destroy the whole of their system; like poor Sisyphus, they have no other way of rolling the stone but by destroying its weight.

On the whole, we learn the great importance of this doctrine of atonement, which has formed the great boundary between the religion of Jesus Christ and the religion of Nature. Those who have entered into infidelity have entered it by this avenue—THE REJECTION OF THE ATONEMENT.

Religion requires the sacrifice of the pleasures of sense, of the boasts of virtue, and, last of all, the pride of reason. In order to exercise our humility by receiving the Scriptures upon his word as little children, let us bring every thing to this standard; lay aside every pretension to reason, where revelation is concerned, and become fools, that we may learn Christ.

XIV.

DISSENT.

There was nothing that appeared to Mr. Hall's mind more unaccountable than the circumstance of some few of his early friends and associates conforming to the Church of England, and departing from the pale of dissent. His remarks upon them in the private and social circle were very strong, notwithstanding the esteem he had for their general character and amiable dispositions. He would never admit the possibility of such a change, but from the influence of sinister motives, or being thrown into peculiar local associations and habits of life. So that, next to the safety of the soul in conversion of the heart to God, was his anxiety that all his friends should be consistent Dissenters, contending for the purity and simplicity of the Christian faith and worship; unawed and uninfluenced by civil authority or acts of Parliament, not to receive the traditions of men for the ordinances of God. "The kingdom of Jesus Christ," he would say, "is not of this world, it is within you; it is a spiritual dominion of the heart, a subjection of all the powers of the mind to the sole authority of one Lawgiver.

"The present hierarchy of the Church of England is not formed after the model of the Scriptures, and assumes a power and authority unknown in the first and purest ages of Christianity, inverting the order of the apostolic churches.

"When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Philippi," Mr. Hall observed, "he first addresses the church, then the bishops and deacons. *To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.* The body of the common people, in primitive times, decided on all weighty matters that arose in the Church. It is evident, from this salutation, that the term bishops and deacons comprehended all the teachers at that time in the Church, and that the distinction arose afterward between the bishops, or pastors, and deacons; for, certainly, if there had been any other order, they would not have been overlooked or neglected by the apostle in his epistles to the churches."

A gentleman having left the Dissenters, and conformed to the Establishment, Mr. Hall was informed that this friend denied the primitive custom of the Church choosing its own officers and ministers. "Sir," he said, "he cannot deny this without flying in the face of all antiquity; for not only the Scriptures, but the early fathers, bear united testimony to the fact of the power and authority emanating from the common people."

In 1818, Mr. Hall, in writing to a friend, says, "As it (Episcopacy) subsists at present among us, I am sorry to say I can

scarcely conceive a greater abuse. It subverts equally the rights of pastors and of people, and is nothing less than one of the worst relics of the papal hierarchy. Were every thing else what it ought to be in the Established Church, prelacy, as it now subsists, would make me a Dissenter."

There were four principal things which he set his mind upon. The 1st was, A Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, as unjust towards the Dissenters; 2. A Reform in the Commons House of Parliament; 3. The Abolition of Slavery; 4. A Reform in the Church Establishment, to secure to Dissenters, not merely toleration, but a perfect equality as to rights and privileges; or, in other words, that Dissenters should not be compelled to pay for the support of a church which they conscientiously disapproved, while they paid for their own ministers and places of worship. The first of these he only lived to see accomplished; but, had he lived three years longer, he would have found only one more to be achieved. His grand maxim was, "that there can be no perfect religious liberty without natural and political liberty."

I never knew a man who had so much of the spirit of martyrdom. "For these principles it was," he would say, "our forefathers, the noble army of the Puritans, bled and suffered, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods:" or, his other felicitous term, the "celestial nobility." Christian liberty was to him a sacred fountain, in which all the Roman Gentile virtues that immortalized the names of Cicero, Plutarch, Seneca, and all the old philosophers, are baptized and regenerated, and take a new name and nature: dipped in this living spring, they are planted, and flourish in the paradise of God.

XV.

CHRISTIAN INTEGRITY.

Everything in Christianity tends to enforce the practice of justice and integrity in all your dealings. It is the very spirit of the law which says, "Thou shalt not covet." It is impossible to lay down general principles upon this subject; but, in matters of prudence, last thoughts are best; in morality, your first thoughts are best. Where things are indifferent as to principle, we have frequently to calculate consequences, which requires a long train of thought and reflection; but in matters of conscience, God has not left us to such a process as this, for he has placed in the heart of every man a vicegerent, and whatever this conscience testifies at first is best; you may upbraid its voice, and may silence it, but whatever in its first movements it condemns, ought to be opposed. Your endeavours to resist it will be like labouring in the fire; always, then, in matters of morality, trust your first thoughts.

Persons are sufficiently selfish not to give sentence in favour of themselves; and, like every other faculty, conscience is liable to become darkened; but if the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness! It is putting out, as far as possible, the light of the mind, and leaving us in a state of abject wretchedness. It is suicide of the immortal part.

XVI.

PREPARATION FOR HEAVEN.

[Peroration of sermon on *No Temple in Heaven*, when delivered in Broadmead, Bristol, Lord's Day evening, May 4, 1828. See the sermon itself, from Mr. Hall's notes, vol. iii., 199–203.]

This meditation should lead us to practical improvements, without which it is pursued in vain.

1. Those must be essentially disqualified for heaven who find no pleasure in devotion. This is the first idea suggested. The rudest barbarian is not more unfit for the society of the profoundest philosopher, not more unprepared to relish the refined beauties of poetry or art, than the carnal and undevout person is unfit for heaven. This is the relation, not of resemblance, however distant; it is the relation of utter contrariety and contrast: in such a case, all flows in a contrary direction. Without a devotional frame of mind, without any taste for the friendship of God, it is impossible to enjoy heaven. All that God promises is suited only to those that are sanctified; and who would promise that which cannot be enjoyed, that which must rather be the geatest annoyance? But what a weariness to many is the Sabbath-day! How ready are such to say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways!" No need of an arbitrary decree to exclude such from heaven; they stand self-excluded, because self-disqualified! By their admission into heaven, an order of nature would be insulted and violated!

2 What a reason is here why we should improve the seasons of devotion, and especially these Sabbath opportunities of religious improvement! When we consider how large a portion of our time we are necessitated to give to the affairs of this transient state, how dear to us should these moments of sacred worship be, when we may meditate on eternal concerns, and prepare ourselves for heaven! If we suffer these opportunities to pass unimproved, we shall not be likely to improve any others. He who wastes his Sabbaths will be too sure to waste the whole of his time for irreligious purposes, and will be condemned at last to lament his folly, like the great scholar who exclaimed on his deathbed, "Alas, I have spent a life in laboriously doing nothing!"

3. Finally, how happy are those that love God and his service! They need not look into the secrets of heaven to see their names in the Book of Life; the mark of God is on their foreheads; the

proofs of their destination lie on the surface; the whole tendency of their thoughts and desires, their employments and pleasures, their sighs and sufferings, has been towards heaven: they sighed for such a state, they sought for it, they are fitted for none beside; none else is congenial with their character: and that inheritance is reserved in heaven for them; they shall be with Him "whom, having not seen, they love; in whom, believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." They have their fruit unto holiness here, and what shall be their end but everlasting life? They shall have an entrance abundantly ministered to them into the kingdom of the Lord; "good measure, pressed down, and running over, shall God give into their bosoms!"

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